
MOVING TOWARDS EXCELLENCE IN PLANNING POLICY

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1. Purpose

This paper, together with its companion note “Moving Towards Excellence in Development Control”, has been produced by the Planning Officers Society to set out what will constitute an excellent planning policy service. It seeks to identify specific aspects of the development plan process, policy formulation and planning information functions, along with associated management mechanisms, that contribute to the achievement of excellence. It draws on current good practice and a wide range of guidance and professional practice reports and reflects the latest (as of late 2001) Government initiatives. The Planning Green Paper does not fundamentally affect the contents, but if the Paper is implemented some detailed wording would need to be altered.

This version is interim in nature. Feedback is sought from within a number of forums and relevant organisations as well as from local authorities. A final version will be produced as part of the revised and updated Good Practice Guide on Best Value and Planning at the end of the year.

While linked to Best Value and performance management, this paper is designed for use by professional managers, as part of the ongoing process of service improvement, whether or not as part of a Best Value Review. The Excellence Matrix in Section 4 provides a basis for any review of a planning policy service aimed at improving its quality of process and outcome. It is recognised that planning policy operates over long time-scales and any review must embrace previous achievements, current activities and future intentions, as well as examine how it responds to changing circumstances.

However the functions are managed in practical terms, there is a fundamental need to integrate the preparation, monitoring and review of planning policy and the development control service. They are mutually dependent in that a relevant or up-to-date plan and associated guidance is key to providing the development framework within which an excellent development control service can be operated. For this reason this document should be read in conjunction with the associated paper for development control. The achievement of an excellent planning policy service will also rely on the engagement of other services such as transport planning, housing and economic development, and be closely linked into the corporate agenda.

As part of its modernising agenda the Government has set out its objectives that it considers should be implemented through the planning system. The Government wants to see the planning system play a positive and effective role in achieving a better quality of life for all,

economic growth and better public services – the well-being agenda. The planning system should not be seen as a regulatory service that is an end in itself. It should be seen as a means of delivering what people want – jobs, homes, better transport, lively city centres, healthy villages, sensitive care for our built environment and the countryside. In doing this the planning system should always respect and take account of people’s opinions and rights.

The planning system must provide effective mechanisms whereby the differing and sometimes conflicting objectives and aspirations of stakeholders can be resolved in a way that is fair, open and accountable for all stakeholders. This objective must go hand in hand with the delivery of a quality planning service, which is fast and effective, and delivers the certainty and measurable quality outcomes that address the needs and expectations of the community and business interests. Members are a critical part of this process, as the policies pursued and the quality of decision-making underpins the effectiveness of the overall planning service.

An excellent service would make explicit and demonstrate in a practical way how it sets out and achieves the Government’s national objectives as well as identifying and tackling regional and local issues and needs. It would also seek to integrate at the point of delivery with broad-based initiatives such as the community plan and sustainable development. Therefore the “Excellence Matrix” in section 4 makes reference to the wider agenda as set out more fully in reports by other parties; particularly the Audit Commission - in relation to their inspection function and their advice on best practice; and the DTLR and their wide range of guidance, particularly the “Good Practice Guide on Development Plans”.

2. Key Issues

An excellent Policy Planning Service will need to address key issues that are likely to impinge on the service and reflect best practice:-

- **Achievement of quality outcomes**
- **The duty of Local Authorities to promote economic, social and environmental well-being**
- **The inter-relationship of an up-to-date vision as set out in the Community Strategy and Local Agenda 21 strategy with the development plan**
- **How to ensure policies are realistic, deliverable and sustainable**
- **Ensuring that the information is available to assess what is happening**
- **Improving customer awareness and accessibility**
- **Contributing to the delivery of national objectives**
- **Addressing emerging issues and opportunities**
- **Securing adequate resources – staff, money and including ICT**

3. Towards an Excellent Service

An excellent service is one that is demonstrably performing well across a number of Critical Factors. The Critical Factors may change in relation to the functions and objectives of the Planning Service, but those considered fundamental to the Policy Planning aspects of an excellent planning service are outlined below. These Critical Factors seek to encapsulate

clear objectives based on current thinking on key issues and best practice. The first three Critical Factors focus on how the policy planning service can play a positive and effective role in achieving quality outcomes in a logical, realistic and proactive way. The quality of the planning policy service will be most influenced by these factors. The next four focus on the need to engage the local community as well as form appropriate corporate and wider partnerships to inform and integrate the policy planning process. Lastly, the service must understand and address wider issues and manage resources to maximise performance. Where resources may limit progress in relation to some Critical Factors, priorities should be explicitly identified and agreed and targets for achievement set.

1. *The Planning Policy Service should genuinely shape events based on a common explicit vision and objectives that are deliverable and sustainable.*

The development plan and other planning documents address the well-being and aspirations of all in the community, with a vision which flows visibly and clearly from the Community Strategy. Objectives should be realistic and achievable, making best use of local opportunities and resources.

The Service explicitly addresses social inclusion, and ensures the formulation of the development plan is closely integrated with the Community Strategy and is subject to the sustainability appraisal process.

2. *The development plan and other policy statements are up to date, relevant, and provide an effective and positive framework for decision making.*

Timetables for the formulation of policy need to be as tight as possible to ensure policy statements are not overtaken and out-of date, with the plan expeditiously reviewed and adopted following the approval of the tier above. Policy statements are of direct relevance to local issues, needs and aspirations and also reflect explicit consideration of major developments.

Active monitoring of processes and the built outcomes and end-products should be designed into the planning process, with monitoring results informing policy development. Strong linkages exist between development control practice and policy formulation to facilitate feedback and ensure that the greater proportion of development takes place on sites identified within the plan.

The framework provides a basis for consistent decision-making that achieves objectives, while also dealing with changing circumstances, needs or opportunities through the provision of (for example) Interim Planning Statements and Supplementary Planning Guidance. Any “informal” updating of the plan between formal reviews e.g. new PPG, departures, appeal decisions, are carefully recorded and publicised.

3. *The Planning Policy Service understands and optimises emerging opportunities to deliver high quality outcomes.*

The planning policy service seeks to maximise benefits for the whole community and achieve demonstrable outcomes in relation to the economic, environmental quality and wider sustainability agendas.

The Service needs to be outward looking and innovative, anticipating change and actively seeking opportunities to take new approaches, review policies and secure new benefits. It plays a key role in making the best use of opportunities to deliver strategies such as regeneration, and provide the direction for focused initiatives and master plans - though

depending on the historic management of planning functions, implementation aspects may lie with other sections of the wider planning service.

Member and staff attitudes underpin the ability of the service to play these roles - recruitment and training need to be considered in conjunction with this criteria.

4. *All stakeholders are effectively kept informed, and engaged, in the process of policy making and review.*

Customer-aware and accessible communication about the plan includes up-to-date information in plain language/translations and in a variety of formats including ICT. All documents are concise, logically structured, and easily readable by the non-specialist in plan preparation. There is clear, timely, widely disseminated information about the process to be followed and the opportunities to be involved and to exert influence over the outcome. Formal objections (and other challenges) should be properly recognised and responded to with appropriate and positive attitudes and actions.

Effective and responsive consultation provides the key approach for learning and addressing the community's needs and expectations that can be furthered by the planning system, and should be visibly influential in shaping the content of the plan or policies. It is consciously geared to the needs of the whole community, including minorities and hard to reach groups reflecting different interests and issues in the plan or policies, emphasising key choices about direction, rather than about sites.

5. *There is clear integration between planning policy, the community strategy and other key corporate initiatives and strategies.*

The policy planning service is a major contributor to achieving corporate goals and vision, and provides information and expertise on a regular basis to corporate policy work, particularly the Community Strategy. Consultations on the plan or policies should be tied into the corporate consultation process so that each informs the other rather than being unrelated or overlapping, including Local Strategic Partnerships.

At a more local level, close working contributes to co-ordinated funding approaches and successful integration of new development, especially housing, with community and social infrastructure needs and integrated transport.

6. *The Service is responsive to Government, national, and regional initiatives and policy.*

The introduction of Best Value, improving accountability, local democracy and promoting the well being of communities are all key aims identified by the Government in order to change the way services are provided so that they are 'citizen centred'.

Planning policy will accord with these and other national guidance and legislation, including "Modernising Planning", "Modernising Planning – a progress report" – DETR 1998 and 1999, and Planning Policy Guidance notes. It will apply relevant standards from the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Access to Information and Human Rights Acts.

Policy planning will need to address issues arising from any tension between the Council's objectives and aspirations and Government planning policy, as well as the relationship with regional strategic processes and the new issues they raise. Generally policies will help to meet national objectives, for example by identifying the amount and types of new housing needed, and where it will go. Policy planning will also contribute to the

achievement of objectives such as sustainability and public transport and articulate the way the thinking in the Rogers report on urban renaissance is taken forward.

7. *The Service establishes strong and effective relationships and partnerships with other agencies and organisations to formulate and deliver plan policies.*

It will be essential to work closely with other external organisations to facilitate the role of planning policy in delivering the governments Urban Renaissance, Rural Areas, and other agendas. An integrated approach is needed to tackle cross-cutting issues such as sustainability, community safety, social exclusion and regeneration. Partnership working is required across adjacent and other tiers of local authorities as well as with the private and voluntary sector.

The Service makes effective use of existing partnerships, particularly the Local Strategic Partnership. Partnerships need to be monitored to assess their contribution to the delivery of Policy Planning objectives and to ensure they are inclusive.

8. *The Service is provided by appropriately skilled and competent people.*

It will not be possible to deliver an excellent service unless there are sufficient numbers of skilled staff to meet resource needs. A range of innovative solutions should be considered to secure adequate resources and competent staff to deliver the service, supported by staff development programmes and skills training (and not just for imminent tasks). “Outward-looking” learning opportunities are important as well as basic working practices and procedures.

The Service is keen to identify good practice and learn from its own and others’ successes and problems, with a commitment to supporting and valuing staff. Measures to facilitate training and development for Members should also be in place.

9. *Provides an effective, well-managed and appropriately resourced Policy Service.*

The Service Plan underpins the achievement of quality outcomes while making efficient use of resources. It sets out clear standards and performance indicators, and anticipates and provides adequate budgets and other resources. Effective management approaches and continual performance monitoring with the involvement of users and staff ensure the delivery of priorities.

It will address the implications of e-government for the policy planning system. An innovative ICT strategy which meets E-governance targets is required to facilitate delivery of objectives and organisational development, to include provision of information in electronic form to aid workload and performance management and to increase customer choice in accessing information, participation and consultation.

10. *The Service incorporates best practice and seeks to continually improve.*

An excellent service is one that is continually seeking to develop its performance through monitoring and review as an integral part of a performance management approach. It would actively seek to learn from users of the service and local stakeholders as well as search out Best Practice from elsewhere and draw on it selectively.

For each of these “Critical Factors” there will be **essential features**, which, if achieved, contribute to “excellence”, though they will apply to different processes and outcomes of the service. These have been broadly grouped into 5 areas:-

- **Policy and Approach**- clear objectives and strategies for the service
- **Customer Focus**- the service as seen from the user perspective
- **Process and Procedures**- internal mechanisms for achieving that element of the service
- **Performance measurement**- performance targets and monitoring systems
- **Outcomes**- what service is delivered in terms of clear and sustainable outcomes

A Summary Table of the Critical Factors and associated Essential Features follows as an “**Excellence Matrix**” in section 4. The Essential Features have been set out in a condensed form for ease of reference, and are listed in 5 columns, one column for each of the 5 groupings mentioned above. Some elements of the Essential Features may appear in more than one cell where they relate to more than one heading or Critical Factor.

4. Excellence Matrix

It is intended that the Excellence Matrix below will provide a useful and practical basis for reviewing key features of any Policy Planning Service- though it can be used in a number of ways. Its primary role will be to highlight characteristics of an excellent service- which may provide ideas for service improvement, facilitate “gap analysis” and allow “bench-marking” of current practice.

Within the Critical Factors there are features which may be more important than others depending on the local authority and local issues. The Matrix does not attempt to weight features and it is not intended as a “scoring” mechanism.

MOVING TOWARDS EXCELLENCE IN PLANNING POLICY : MATRIX

CRITICAL FACTORS (Criteria)	ESSENTIAL FEATURE: POLICY AND APPROACH	ESSENTIAL FEATURE: CUSTOMER FOCUS	ESSENTIAL FEATURE: PROCESS AND PROCEDURES	ESSENTIAL FEATURE: PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT	ESSENTIAL FEATURE: OUTCOMES
<p>1.</p> <p><i>The Planning Policy Service should genuinely shape events based on a common explicit vision and objectives that are deliverable and sustainable.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies exist to ensure the formulation of development plan policy and associated guidance addresses the different interests and needs of the community, rather than treating "the public" as homogenous • The development plan is recognised by leading members and chief officers as a key tool for delivery of the Community Strategy and other corporate strategies. • The vision flows visibly, clearly and naturally out of the Community Strategy. • The development plan is rooted in the Community Strategy - its formulation is integrated with the CS and shows commonality of content and wording. • The development plan aims to be realistic and achievable • The plan is subjected to sustainability appraisal against published criteria throughout its evolution. • The Service has a clear focus on securing quality outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service explicitly addresses social inclusion. • Policy reflects and balances the aspirations of all in the community. • Plan policy, content and format meets different stakeholder needs in the public, private and voluntary sectors. • Consultation and engagement on the development plan and Community Strategy are integrated where possible. • The service works with the Local Strategic Partnership-to support and help deliver each other's objectives. • The community are engaged in identifying sustainability criteria and involved in the sustainability appraisal process for the development plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective mechanisms are in place to integrate the development plan and Community Strategy. • Information collection is coordinated so it is usable for both the development plan and Community Strategy. • Procedures exist to rigorously test emerging policies and projects to ensure that they are capable of practical application • Policies and site allocations are appraised against sustainability criteria, with explicit attention at each stage of reporting. • Sustainability criteria are publicised. • The Community Strategy and LA21 processes are used to identify sustainability criteria. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development plan and Community Strategy have common elements, within vision, objectives, targets, performance indicators and key outcomes. • The key objectives of the development plan are monitored annually against a published set of performance indicators. • An audit trail is maintained of the inter-relationship of the development plan and Community Strategy • Regular reporting to chief officers and members on progress and key issues in the formulation of the development plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan exhibits a logical strategy that is derived from the facts and identified issues, providing a clear sense of direction. • Feedback from stakeholders indicates a clear perception of coherence between the development plan and the Community Strategy. • Stakeholders' feedback confirms that the policy planning service is recognised as an important tool in achieving their aspirations. • Outcomes clearly show evidence of planning policy influence. • Targets in development plan e.g. affordable housing have been achieved. • Sustainability reporting /appraisal demonstrates improvements that are due to policy impacts.

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<p>2.</p> <p>The development plan and other policy statements are up to date, relevant, and provide an effective and positive framework for decision making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear guidance, in the form of an up-to-date and statutorily adopted development plan, is in place or being expeditiously reviewed following the firming up of high tier plan. • The most up- to-date development plan (draft or adopted) has a clear underlying strategy that relates explicitly to higher level planning strategies and other corporate local government and partner strategies, especially the Community Strategy. • The service is committed to optimise linkages, integration and feedback between development control and planning policy functions. • The development plan contains robust policies. • Monitoring requirements are designed into the planning process so that monitoring criteria and mechanisms can be defined at an early stage. • Interim Planning Statements (IPS) and other means e.g. Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) are used to elaborate policies and ensure the plan is up to date and responds to new approaches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process and procedures for plan preparation and approval aim to minimise length of the development plan process e.g.: printed expeditiously; adopted ASAP after receiving inspector's report; revision of deposit plan published rapidly. • The plan and policies effectively address local issues. • The plan and other planning policies effectively reflect the spatial implications of other strategies. • Stakeholders are involved in policy formulation. • Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and Interim Planning Statements have all been subject to public consultation. • Design guidance, planning briefs and other guidance and strategies are prepared in association with key stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit procedures ensure action is taken to respond to changed policies or circumstances. • Policy, including SPG, and practice follow current guidance and incorporate current legislation and Best Practice. • A systematic approach ensures that policy formulation and decisions are taken in the context of national, regional local and corporate policies and guidance. (see also CF5,6). • Procedures ensure major regeneration and/or development projects are either reflected in the development plan, or in some form of Interim Planning Statement. • IPS, draft SPG and similar interim policy documents are recorded and publicised. • Mechanisms exist to ensure close and effective working between development control and policy planning officers. • Monitoring outcomes are built into policy development and plan making, ensuring an explicit link between the evidence of monitoring and changes in policy. • Systems are in place to evaluate appeal and other decisions to assess problems and implications and the robustness of the policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key objectives of the development plan are monitored annually against a published set of performance indicators, with outcomes linked to the review. • A published timetable exists for the adoption and/or review of the plan, linked to other tier plans. • The practicality of policies is monitored in light of experience. • The plan and policies are robust - in the sense that implementation is not dependent on the successful achievement of a few key infrastructure or development projects, and the strategy can handle changes in circumstances. e.g. departures/ appeals. • Decisions on funding for the corporate strategies demonstrate planning policy has been an influential factor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Plan/framework has been produced expeditiously - either adopted within the last 3 years; or a replacement published or alteration plan in the last 2 years; or awaiting an inspectors report. • The greater proportion of development takes place on sites identified within the plan; in the case of housing, in close accordance with phasing set out in the plan. • Key developments identified as central to the strategy are completed or under way. • There is a low percentage of appeals where the Council's decision has been overturned on policy issues. • Supported departure applications from the approved statutory plan represent a low percentage of the total permissions granted. • Clear evidence that policies have been changed expeditiously as circumstances have changed.

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<p>3.</p> <p><i>The Planning Policy Service understands and optimises emerging opportunities to deliver high quality outcomes.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service is committed to delivering quality outcomes that maximise benefits for the wider community and ensure local economic stability, adequate infrastructure, sustainability, and environmental stewardship. • The culture is actively outward-looking and flexible enough to address emerging objectives such as Urban Renaissance • Adopts a clear corporate policy for the positive use of Section 106 agreements. • Keeps development plans under constant review, ensuring Interim Planning Statements and policies address changes in local circumstances and opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community needs that are identified as part of the policy planning and related processes are consciously addressed when pursuing opportunities. • The Service involves key stakeholders, other council services and other local authorities/ agencies to help deliver sustainable development and quality outcomes. • Promotes ongoing dialogue and builds positive relationships with the development industry to ensure delivery of quality outcomes. • Actively seeks stakeholder views on the impact and quality of outcomes. • Promotes awareness within the community of what quality means, in terms of the economic, social and physical environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures are in place for an ongoing review of the quality of outcome, 'added value' of the Service and impact on the community, with results fed into policy development. • Uses internal and external survey results to feed into the policy making process and to improve/adapt the service to meet user expectations. • Facilitates dialogue with key stakeholders, including the development industry, as to the importance and characteristics of quality. • Mechanisms are in place to anticipate and scan for opportunities when change takes place and to actively seek to identify opportunities. • Policy planning processes are used to recognise and assess opportunities and to trigger appropriate engagement and action. • Clear monitoring systems are in place for S106 agreements to ensure compliance and collect evidence that benefits are meeting community and corporate objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors outcomes against local quality of life indicators and other relevant indicators to confirm scale of improvement and level of community benefit. • On an occasional basis carries out outcome surveys and undertakes outcome assessments, such as the use of Design Award Schemes. • Monitors the impact of plan policies e.g. if significantly higher densities are proposed, what effect on the environment, as perceived by residents and the market. • The Service is instrumental in securing additional funding resources. • The Service is influential in attracting desired investment to the area. • Performance is recognised through accolades and positive press. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of stakeholder satisfaction with the quality of the economic, social and physical environment. • Are a number of significant examples of high quality new development in accordance with current policy. • Successfully protects and enhances important sites in the public realm, built /natural landscape, conservation areas, SSSIs etc. • Widens choice of sustainable transport by securing shift in modal split of transport access to developments. • Evidence of improved community facilities and social inclusion as a result of planning action. • Enhanced local economy. • Evidence that opportunities seen and positively acted upon. • Service seen as a facilitator of change.

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<p>4. All stakeholders are effectively kept informed, and engaged, in the process of policy making and review.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes a strong “listening“ culture, seeking genuine dialogue and feedback on action and incorporating Customer Care objectives. Adopts a strategy for reaching traditionally hard to reach groups. Formulates and implements a clear strategy for the provision of clear and comprehensive information and advice, in consultation with stakeholders. Objectives include that information is regularly monitored and updated to ensure relevance and availability. Ensures information is provided in a clear and accessible form, using plain language and in a variety of formats geared to the needs of minorities and hard to reach groups. Has a published guide (no more than 3 years old) into the planning policy services offered, this being available in form(s) that are accessible to minority groups in the community. An ICT customer user strategy is in place with a planning dimension and linked to the Corporate E-government strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A comprehensive, up-to-date and relevant range of information and advice is available via a range of media (including internet) that includes statutory documents, SPG, and publicly available information. Information and advice content responds to local needs and demand and covers issues relevant to all service users, including information about the organisation and other related development issues. Information, plans and documents are available free of charge or at a price that is affordable to the target users. Publishes a ‘popular’ version of the current development plan (draft or adopted). Liaises formally with local community / minority groups to establish the most effective mechanisms and formats to facilitate engagement. Seeks out and utilises relevant state-of-the-art mechanisms for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures exist for ensuring (e.g. via training) that staff understand the expected culture and have the skills to be customer friendly. Develops proactive approaches to involving traditionally hard to reach groups. Undertakes follow up analysis and surveys on the provision of information and the effectiveness of gaining views of hard to reach groups. Has a clear procedure for regularly reviewing information for accuracy and relevance and updating the information where necessary. This would include designing, managing and monitoring web sites. All staff is trained and knowledgeable about the range of documents and literature that is available to customers. Integrates advice and information with other disciplines and co-ordinates the provision of advice and information on associated development issues. Procedures are in place to enable staff to communicate with and assist people with disabilities (e.g. signing) and people whose first language is not English. ICT is used to enable the provision of the same information whatever the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff display a customer care culture i.e. are friendly, competent and helpful, and make visitors feel welcomed, valued and “listened to”. Regularly monitors levels of awareness in the community about the objectives of the service. Reviews on an ongoing basis policy for ensuring that all groups have equal access to the planning process. Monitors participation in the policy planning process by hard-to reach and socially excluded groups to assess the effectiveness of engagement mechanisms. Regularly reviews user satisfaction with information and advice provided, including accessibility, content, media/format (e.g. ICT), range and scope of information. The review process involves comparing information provision with other similar organisations, including best in class. Updates the Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is real evidence of positive engagement by hard to reach* groups. Policies evidently take forward the interests of otherwise potentially socially excluded groups. An equally open and accessible service is provided to all stakeholders in terms of procedures, standards and participation. Evidence that customers and stakeholders find information easy to get and understand. Evidence of raised community awareness about the service and its objectives. Evidence that positive steps are being taken to raise the profile of the service across the community and with other council services. Recognition of what the service can/can not deliver. Management take forward views of stakeholders and are perceived to be doing so
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4. continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An agreed pro-active public consultation and engagement strategy sets out a clear and explicit purpose and ways for stakeholders to be visibly influential in shaping the content of the plan and other policies. Objectives include ensuring continuous, ongoing and responsive consultation, seen as the key way to facilitate dialogue and learn and address the community's needs and expectations that can be furthered by the planning system. Integrates planning policy consultation and engagement with other consultations and community involvement, fully utilising existing partnerships, residents' associations etc. 	<p>engaging external and internal stakeholders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes dialogue with all stakeholders on the priorities and the range and nature of the objectives and targets that have been set. Links consultations into Community Strategy consultation. Utilises Local Strategic Partnerships and other existing mechanisms to promote engagement by all sections of the community. Provides information in advance, such as the plan's decision-making process and Public Inquiry evidence. Operates an effective and coherent objection tracking system, recognising and responding to objections. Compliments/complaints procedures are readily available to the public. Provides an up-to-date (e.g. plan programme) and interactive web site integrated with the planning portal, with the facility to receive comments electronically. 	<p>information whatever the customer's choice of contact mode (telephone, in-person, letter, electronically).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determines consultation procedures in light of the Human Rights Act and Disability Act, and other legislation as appropriate. Establishes ongoing user groups / forums representing a wide range of stakeholder interests to feed back on service performance and influence Service design. Refreshes the engagement strategy in light of experience at earlier stages. Mechanisms are in place to provide advance information and feedback to facilitate participation. Procedures ensure the objection tracking system comprises a properly set up database for logging each separate objection (including multiple objections by individuals), at both first and revised deposit stage; a clear-minded stance on what constitutes a valid objection at revised deposit stage; and a convenient structure for the Inspector to use in checking that all objections are dealt with and in framing his/her report. 	<p>Policy Service guide in light of monitoring information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key documents have a Crystal Mark or meet other similar 'plain language' standards. Regularly monitors staff awareness of policies and processes and identify appropriate levels of training. Includes public and member feedback on reports and Committee processes in monitoring procedures. Monitor and review systems exist for considering customer comments and acting upon them to improve the level of service delivery. Quality of Service is recognised through national evaluation (e.g. Charter Mark) and other accolades. 	<p>so.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies increasingly reflect the views of stakeholders. Evidence of increasing engagement and confidence that views will be heard. Planning service is valued and supported as being important throughout the community. <p>*Append definition of "hard-to-reach" groups using EU definition.</p>

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<p>5.</p> <p><i>There is clear integration between planning policy, the community strategy and other key corporate initiatives and strategies.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified service objectives reflect and contribute to achieving corporate goals and vision and researched local preferences. Planning Policy Service is closely involved in Community Strategy and as far as practicable the development plan preparation and Community Strategy are managed as an integrated process. The most up- to-date development plan (draft or adopted) takes on board the land-use planning implications of other key strategies. Planning policy reflects investment policies and priorities, and integrates funding from different sources (e.g. health authority, regeneration, transport, housing). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks ownership and understanding amongst other council services and area offices of documentation and information relating to the planning service, its inter-relationship with related disciplines, and its role within the council. Ties consultations into the corporate consultation strategy/process, including means of avoiding “consultation overload” and for obtaining the views of hard to reach groups. Formulation of Development Plan/framework and Community Strategy are based on core intelligence and consultation mechanisms. Provides a corporate “joined-up” response to planning policy enquiries and requests for information that involve other departments/ disciplines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procedures ensure policy planning achieves a “good fit” with the corporate plan and the Community Strategy, having shared objectives, targets and performance measures where relevant. Planning policy service is a major contributor on a regular basis in Community Strategy and corporate policy work, providing information and expertise. Internal consultees are aware of what is expected of policy planning consultation process and the status of comments. Creates explicit links to other key strategies (e.g. LA21, regeneration, local transport and housing) and visibly recognises the implications of the plan for other services and vice-versa. Develops mechanisms to facilitate links and 2-way involvement by all relevant departments in planning policy, such as liaison meetings, focus groups, service-level agreements and partnership working. Establishes a protocol and project management approach for handling major schemes to ensure co-ordination of corporate and planning policy issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures the extent to which the needs of the community, as expressed through the Community Strategy, are met through the annual Community Strategy review against the Development Plan framework. Monitors the corporate approach to planning policy advice through stakeholder forums; feedback on their experience is fed back into service design and used to identify areas for improvement. Integration measured through HIMP and other investment plans. Integration recognised through audit inspection reports and accolades. Integration rewarded by new/extra funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is evidence of integration and ownership of planning policy into corporate vision and working. There is evidence of a proactive approach to fostering good working relationships with other departments and working within a mutually agreed framework. High levels of satisfaction by both internal and external users of the service. The relationship of planning policy to other policy documents is explicit and clear. Evidence of linkages with other plans and strategies. New developments provide / contribute to the infrastructure required by the development, and successfully integrate with community and social infrastructure needs.

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<p>6.</p> <p><i>The Service is responsive to Government, national, and regional initiatives and policy.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service objectives confirm how planning policy will contribute to the achievement of national objectives such as sustainable development, economic growth, increased use of public transport and Urban Renaissance. • Service objectives ensure integration between planning policy and policies / initiatives emerging from e.g. the Regional Development Agency, Regional Economic Strategy and Rural Sub-Strategies. • Policy framework is revised to address national policy changes. • Actively engages with the development of broad national and regional policy, seeking to influence policy to reflect or except local issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides information and “interpretation” for customers of national and regional policy and its implications for local development. • Utilises mechanisms that allow stakeholder input into the debate on these matters. • Publishes urban capacity, brownfield site, employment, and other studies that explain the potential to meet government targets and their impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures are in place to ensure that the planning policy process addresses national and regional guidance and legislation, as well as emerging priorities and best practice guidelines. • Regularly reviews and updates design policies and development briefs to reflect national guidance and initiatives. • Ensures urban capacity, brownfield site, employment, and other studies are undertaken and published to assess the potential to meet government targets or explain why targets can not be met. • Identifies, in conjunction with key stakeholders, local issues that raise concerns over existing or developing national and/or regional policy. • Facilitates sub-regional cross-boundary policy responses as needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitors policies, plans and guidance to ensure they have responded to relevant government issues, criteria and targets. • Monitors implemented proposals to ensure they meet objectives as envisaged. • Monitors regional employment against established targets. • Monitors affordable dwelling completions in relation to planning policy targets. • Recommendations in Local Plan Inspectors’ Reports are relatively few. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity exists over the current local and national factors impacting on development in the area e.g. sources of local development pressures. • No adverse ombudsman or court findings (or costs awarded against) on misapplication of national, regional or development planning policy. • Some developments have delivered national targets/objectives or incorporated recommended principles. • Evidence that national/regional policy has taken account of local issues.
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<p>7. The Service establishes strong and effective relationships and partnerships with other agencies and organisations to formulate and deliver plan policies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops approach based on view that working together and developing positive relationships achieves better-informed, better-supported and more influential plans. • Promotes joint-working and policy co-ordination and delivery with other local authorities including other tiers and agencies of government. • Harnesses partnerships to strengthen forward planning and to deliver initiatives such as Urban Renaissance and regeneration. • Recognises the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) as a key client. • Makes effective use of established partnerships and associated machinery. • Ensures partnership development includes all potential stakeholders through a range of appropriate mechanisms. • Allocates appropriate resources to support partnership working, joint funding etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages in partnerships that help deliver the Community Strategy and development plan. • Promotes and makes use of partnerships that address community needs and issues. • Establishes regular, ongoing and constructive consultation and dialogue with outside organisations to address crosscutting issues. • Encourages and supports (e.g. through choice of format, style, venue/time of meetings etc) community representatives to become involved in partnerships. • Identifies and acts on opportunities to involve the private sector in mutually beneficial partnerships that help deliver plan policies and initiatives. • Promotes “roundtable” style of interaction rather than one-to-one dialogues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate and service procedures secure good working relationships where appropriate with external partners and consultees, to include a shared understanding of relevant timescales, practices and aims. • Mechanisms ensure that the implications of plans and strategies being pursued by other authorities and external bodies (e.g. Health Plan) are identified and linkages followed through. • Establishes clear communication and linkages with the LSP and provides adequate support/input. • Maintains contact with existing partnerships and identifies and reviews potential involvement in the context of policy planning. • Establishes appropriate terms of reference and meeting patterns for each partnership and reviews these regularly. • Identifies criteria for partnership involvement, taking account of effectiveness against forward planning resource and delivery objectives. • Ensures planning policy representation on partnerships is able to make a contribution appropriate to the phase and purpose of the partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning policy representation exists on appropriate working parties and partnerships. • Monitors whether each partnership is effectively “delivering” and regularly reviews the purpose and benefits of involvement. • Positive feedback is received from partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of linkages with other plans and strategies. • Good working relationships within a mutually agreed framework exists with partners. • Evidence that planning policy input has made a difference to what has been delivered. • Evidence that the planning policy input has been recognised and valued.
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<p>8.</p> <p><i>The Service is provided by appropriately skilled and competent people.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognised that skill and competence are enhanced by a broad-based approach to staff development, which aims to value and support staff with training as only one aspect. Staff development plans are derived from the Service Plan and appraisal, and ensure that the skills, knowledge and expertise of all staff match anticipated Service needs. Deploys imaginative and innovative approaches to ensure that all elements of the service are appropriately resourced. Adequately funds development and training programmes, which cover all grades of staff, including agency/ temporary staff. Issues up-to-date and agreed working practice and procedures manual to all staff and regularly review and update it to ensure accuracy and relevance. A Code of Conduct for Officers/Members is in place to ensure both have an up-to-date understanding of their roles and responsibilities as well as processes and procedures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff (including those in other service areas and contract staff) is able to give competent, timely and relevant advice with certainty and integrity. Information and advice provided is right first time. Ensures ongoing staff awareness and training on complaints procedures, use and responses. The Code of Conduct for Officers and Members is made available to the public. Annual staff performance reviews emphasize the contribution staff make to meeting objectives and the wider corporate goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate and service personal career development /training plans (or any other formal process for identifying training and development needs, such as performance reviews) are in place, up-to-date and monitored. A formal programme of staff development addresses basic skills (e.g. customer care, and project management), new issues (e.g. best value, new legislation, E-governance), and learning approaches (e.g. outward-looking, scanning). Procurement strategy supports Service Plan with a range of approaches, including joint-working and shared expertise. Provides induction training programme for all new staff, incorporating the working practice/ procedures manual. Offers a regular training programme for Members on the policy planning process, new legislation, procedures, etc. Ensures wide dissemination of information and skills amongst staff, including an electronic version of the working practices manual to allow remote access. Provides other learning opportunities that relate to Service objectives, such as delegation, shadowing, secondment and CPD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment/procurement, staff development and training against Service Plan requirements. Benchmarking is undertaken against other authorities and best practice. Secure a Charter Mark and Investors in People status. Staff are encouraged to recognise and learn from mistakes, including complaints. Complaints are monitored and work practices reviewed in light of findings; feedback is given to stakeholders on what has changed as a result. Monitors take-up of “outward-looking” learning opportunities, including CPD requirements, and regularly review provision of opportunities and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High staff morale, including low sickness levels. Staff appraisals generally indicate career development. Staff turnover levels in the service are at their optimum. Staff skills and competencies are aligned to meet the required outcomes of the Service. Staff demonstrate positive attitudes towards development and training. Inspector endorses key elements of the Plan. Planning Inquiry process is efficiently and effectively handled. Low level of complaints.
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<p>9. Provides an effective, well-managed and appropriately resourced Policy Service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A coherent Service Plan is in place to establish priorities, clarify budget issues and help achieve efficient use of resources, including staff. • Service Plans set out clearly defined local indicators, standards and performance indicators as a basis for measuring service delivery and monitoring systems. • Has an ICT customer use strategy in place, tailored to the needs of the service and linked to the Corporate E-government strategy. • Incorporates an effective performance management system that ensures tasks are progressed and performance is tracked. • Promotes strong project management approaches that secure the delivery of the Plan to agreed time-scales and quality, and positively manage unanticipated events. • Develops clear-minded approach to securing the human and financial resources necessary to achieve a good quality Plan and associated priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Plans reflect ongoing reconnaissance and are responsive to users and staff. • Service and Performance Plans, including published Plan Programmes, are effectively communicated internally within the organisation. • Service and Performance Plans, including Plan Programmes, are readily accessible to all interested external parties and publicised in the local press and web sites. • Users are involved in the review of service performance against local targets, kept informed via annual monitoring reports, and updated regarding what has changed as a result. • Ensures realistic objectives regarding community involvement in Plan formulation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An annual review of the Service Plan is built into processes and procedures, with clear links into corporate planning frameworks/ budget cycles and regular reporting to Members. • Clear and robust procedures and rationale are in place for identifying service objectives, priorities, targets / milestones and resource needs. • An effective workload and performance management system is in place, supported by resources that are responsive to changing demand for the service. • Management information systems are in place to identify key projects within the work programme, form of policy contribution and resource implications. • Uses project management tools (including risk-assessment) to ensure the authority meets priorities and associated targets for all key policy-planning activities, particularly Plan preparation. • Ensures Development Plan resource requirements are clear and fed into the Service Plan and associated reviews. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continually assesses current service delivery against published local performance indicators, including local customer charters; identify reasons for failure and publish monitoring reports. • Continual improvement is programmed into mainstream activities so as to maintain high level of service performance. • Any improvement action plan includes clear milestones and responsibilities, supported by resources to deliver agreed remedial action and priority service improvements. • Continually monitors the project management process and outcomes on major sites/ developments, with problems rectified and comments fed back to allow continuous improvement. • Recognised as well managed through accreditation or relevant Best Value indicators. • Policy planning is instrumental in securing additional funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local performance indicators are developed and applied. • The percentage of appeals dismissed is above the national average. • Customer surveys show high levels of satisfaction both the NBVPIs and other areas of satisfaction. • Planning Policy Service is held in high repute within the authority. • Evidence of high staff morale and productivity. • High quality Plan/framework and other planning documents delivered within the original timetable. • Effectively contributes to the securing of major developments. • Planning briefs for major sites and interim policies are available where necessary.
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<p>10.</p> <p><i>The Service incorporates best practice and seeks to continually improve.</i></p> <p><u>A supplementary list of detailed Best Practice Principles is attached for reference. Also refer to Baker Guide section 4.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service believes it can always do better, and that good practice is more likely to achieve quality outcomes. • Adopts policy to undertake continual improvement in practices in the areas of community engagement, management and technical functions. • Service and management team is outward looking, identifying best practice elsewhere and looking at how it can be assimilated into the Service. • An agreed annual service plan is in place, and where appropriate have an agreed plan for implementing the Best Value Review of the service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks out and utilises relevant state-of-the-art mechanisms for engaging external and internal stakeholders. • Processes and procedures are developed and improved in light of feedback from users. • Recommendations and decisions are publicly “transparent” and clearly flow from previous documentation. • The most recently updated development plan (whether draft or adopted) is well designed, concise, written in clear English, and has a clear structure that aids users navigation. • The proposals map/illustrative material for most recently updated development plan (whether draft or adopted) is easily understood, clearly cross referenced to the written statement, and emphasises the underlying strategy of the Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice information is regularly disseminated within the service. • Practice and procedures are properly written up and recorded. • Regularly investigates possible best practice e.g. peer review, benchmarking with other local authorities and shared learning. • The service has procedures to ensure that learning is disseminated and used to best effect for the improvement in quality of the service. • Includes clear and concise policies for the protection and enhancement of conservation areas or buildings designated of conservation importance, and have published policies/action plans for their management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrable improvements in the service reflecting adoption of best practice. • Policy planning recognised as making a substantial contribution to achievement of the Community Strategy. • Audit Commission Review 3* status. • Recommendations in Local Plan Inspectors’ Reports concentrate on proposals. • Benchmarking feedback. • Success in funding bids and attracting other investment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Scheme has been implemented. • The service and its policy documents are well regarded by relevant stakeholders. • Greater engagement in the process by stakeholders. • Policies and plan documents of a high standard. • External recognition of the quality of the service through public accolades such as awards. • Highly motivated, positive and informed staff embracing new ideas.
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SUPPLEMENTARY LIST OF BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES (draft)
(Related to Critical Factor 10)

Related to the Policy Planning Service as a Whole

- **customer aware** - addressing the different interests and needs of different sectors of the community, rather than treating "the public" as homogenous and thereby perpetuating approaches which innately favour white, middle class men
- **outward looking** - aware of and actively reconnoitring changes in circumstances and the environment in which it is operating,
- **learning-orientated** - keen to identify good practice and learn from the successes and problems of others, with a commitment to the training and development of staff (and not just for imminent tasks), and involvement at different levels in professional associations, societies or the Institute
- **corporate** - involved on a regular basis in corporate policy work, providing information and expertise
- **proactive** - in dealing with changing circumstances, needs or opportunities, rather than leaving them to be dealt with only at the next plan review
- **evidence-oriented** - an expectation that recommendations will be founded on facts and investigation so that they can be substantiated, as against following the preferences or prejudices of individual officers or groups of members

Related to development plan and policy formulation

- **explicit links to corporate planning** - tied into the corporate plan and (to the extent that it applies) the community strategy, with some objectives, targets and performance measures in common, and visible recognition of the implications of the plan for other services and vice-versa
- **sustainability** - sustainability appraisal built in throughout the process, with explicit attention at each stage of reporting
- **issues-based consultation** - consultation seen as the key way to learn and address the community's needs and expectations which can be furthered by the planning system, and visibly influential in shaping the content of the plan. Consultation with consciously-selected groups reflecting different interests in the plan on the key choices about direction, rather than about sites. Tied into the corporate consultation process so that each informs the other rather than being unrelated,
- **coherent objection tracking** - a properly set up database for logging each separate objection (including multiple objections by individuals), at both first and revised deposit stage; a clear-minded stance on what constitutes a valid objection at revised deposit stage; and a convenient structure for the Inspector to use in checking that all objections are dealt with and in framing his/her report
- **focused inquiry evidence** - which is concise, expressly related to individual objections (even if the same section of the evidence covers a number of objections making the same point), and unrepentive; and in the case of larger authorities founded upon introductory proofs which set the scene and framework for the more detailed evidence

SUPPLEMENTARY LIST OF BEST PRACTICE PRINCIPLES (draft) - continued

- **supplementary planning guidance** - SPG is used to develop more detailed guidance under the umbrella of development plan policies, and the way it is produced conforms with the requirements of PPG12 and follows the principles set out here
- **effective monitoring** -the requirements of monitoring are designed into the planning process, so that the monitoring criteria are defined and the means for doing so identified at an early stage. Regular monitoring statements are prepared and widely disseminated. The outcomes of monitoring are built into policy development and plan-making, so that there is an explicit link between the evidence of monitoring and changes in and development of policy

Related to the content of the development plan and other relevant policies

- **plan horizon** - should be at least 10 years from the anticipated date of adoption, with explicit consideration of the longer-term pattern of development and the implications for sustainability, infrastructure planning, key elements in the current proposals, etc
- **consistency with strategy** - including RPG, the structure plan and PPGs
- **policy expression** - the level of detail in the plan and the way policies are structured is related to the circumstances of the plan, so that it will properly be different for a city-wide plan and a rural area of small settlements
- **generic policies** - a few generic policies rather than large numbers of policies for particular types of development
- **evidence-based** - at least the more important policies should be demonstrably founded in evidence about the local economic, social and environmental conditions, rather than assumption, assertion or "local knowledge"
- **robust** - in the sense that implementation is not dependent on the successful achievement of a few key infrastructure or development projects, and the strategy can handle changes in circumstances
- **SPG used** - to develop more detailed guidance and thereby allow plan policies to be concise. SPG must be clearly tied into the appropriate policies, and conform with the rules set out in PPG12.