

Business Plan

2019 to 2024

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Planning Officers Society is the ‘credible voice of public sector planners in England’. We represent nearly 2000 individual planners at ALL levels working in over 80% of the local authorities and public sector organisations around England.
- 1.2 Our aim is to help ensure that planning makes a major contribution to achieving sustainable development, from national to local level, in ways which are fair and equitable and achieve the social, economic and environmental aspirations of the community.
- 1.3 We promote best practice in planning and seek to work with Government and other bodies to maintain and improve standards of planning to achieve great place leadership and help planners be great place-makers for the benefit of the public.
- 1.4 We operate in three main ways:
 1. As a support network for planners in the public sector
 2. As promoters of best practise in planning
 3. As a think tank and lobbying organisation for excellence in planning practice
- 1.5 Our objectives are to advance the education of the public in planning law, planning policy and public sector planning practice and related services for the public benefit in particular by:
 - Supporting local and central government fulfil their statutory planning duties
 - Undertaking research (and publishing the useful results of such research) in the subjects
 - Providing advice and guidance, information and promoting best practice and high standards in planning and related services
 - Liaising and working with planning professionals, local and central government, the Royal Town Planning Institute and other related professional bodies to maintain and improve standards of planning for the public benefit
- 1.6 The Society’s organisational structure is formed by a Board, with a Chair of the Board working with the President, to represent the Society at meetings and events. The Board is responsible for charity trustee functions, strategy formulation, operational, financial and personnel matters.
- 1.7 There are also two standing networks -spatial planning and development management - and each have a chair that is on the Board. The Society has a regional network and identified spokespersons for specialist topics. The Society’s means of selecting and appointing to roles was reviewed and amended in December 2018 to introduce an election process to encourage broader engagement by the membership.
- 1.8 To encourage young planners within the public sector the Society developed POS NOVUS. NOVUS has set out its own manifesto and engages in the Society’s annual conference. The group provides valuable challenge and ideas within the Society. The Chair of POS NOVUS is a member of the Board.

2 Current context

External

- 2.1 Over the last decade, the Government has significantly reduced its financial support to local authorities forcing them to make major savings. Against a backdrop presenting planning as part of the problem rather than its proper role as the key enabler of great place making and coordination across a challenged public sector, it is not surprising that this has placed planning department budgets under considerable pressure and reduced representation of senior planning posts at management team level.
- 2.2 Through this period, the Society has seen its role to engage constructively and work with government to ensure that these changes are as workable in practice as possible. The Society remains determined to ensure that the public receives the best possible planning service whatever the legislative context and that our membership is fully informed about and can engage in comment and debate about the changing policy environment.
- 2.3 This business planning review takes place against the backdrop of Brexit and the current inevitable focus on this of much of Government. There has nevertheless been a notable recent shift in the language and framing of the role of public sector planning, particularly in how it can support solutions to the 'housing crisis' and to build beautiful places.
- 2.4 Against an active and growing private sector and the backdrop of 'austerity', job opportunities have been limited and roles in local authorities are increasingly difficult to fill. A public sector planning career needs strongly promoting and young planners choosing this path need support and professional development from those with the experience and skills.
- 2.5 Across the built environment sector, our relationships with key partners are varied. Some significant successes have been achieved in recent years best represented by the joint working with the BPF and the annual joint conference. Importantly, the RTPI is resurgent under new leadership and closer relationships with the Society are being developed. Further work in this area will be pursued, especially around common ground for future POS Manifesto lobbying.
- 2.6 Whilst change is a familiar companion of public sector planning, the recent rapid and quickening pace of technological change and the opportunities particularly from digital is an area which the Society is less well equipped to advise and support its membership on. Like all change, it provides potential opportunities and risks that the Society will need to better understand.

Internal

- 2.7 The Society relies on its annual membership subscription income for its work, together with any gift-aided profit from its trading arm. The current financial climate in the public sector means that it remains particularly important for the Society to demonstrate its value to its membership.
- 2.8 The Society's corporate membership base and income has shrunk due to a number of external factors including public sector 'austerity', the creation of a number of unitary councils and more recently as an increasing number of authorities follow the path of shared services.

- 2.9 Of additional relevance in the business planning context is the significantly reduced time that practicing planning officers have to engage with and dedicate towards society business, meaning limited capacity and reliance on too few individuals. In response to this we engaged a Policy Officer which has been very successful, but this is an area that we must continue to work hard on.
- 2.10 The Society must encourage and facilitate greater participation by its members across all the regions and will continue to promote participation through forum and regional meetings and by encouraging the active participation of younger members through POS NOVUS. Given resource and time pressure for members, innovative ways to achieve wider engagement will be needed. Enabling a dedicated resource to explore how to best do this and in the first instance help coordinate across the lead roles in our regions and specialists would improve the Society's limited capacity and reach.
- 2.11 In this context of both the external and internal pressures, the relevance of the Society and the role it plays for our membership has never been more important.

3 Drivers of Business Plan Refresh

- 3.1 It is good organisational practice for the Society to review and refresh its business plan on a regular basis. Given the national context and our internal issues, there is a clear need for an up-to-date business plan and activity plan to help address the challenges for the Society and public sector planning.
- 3.2 The current presidential team (2018-2021) has agreed to use this opportunity to build longer-term continuity by aligning our overall themes across presidential years and to monitor and drive progress. Many of the issues by their nature remain relevant over much longer than a three year period. This is the same for much of the activity that POS regularly engages in and many of the actions that this Business Plan needs to drive.
- 3.3 The following establishes the key aims for the next five years, how we will get there, an activity plan and identified ongoing activities that are core to the Society's purpose that will help provide a clear work programme and priorities.
- 3.4 To help encourage stronger engagement with our membership and an opportunity to shape the Business Plan, the final draft version will undergo a period of consultation prior to adoption by the Board.

4 Where we want to be in 2024

Our aims

- To remain the credible voice representing public sector planning and influencing government, local government and key partners
- A stable and engaged membership representing at least 80% of LPAs
- A champion of equality and diversity with a representative Board
- A forward-looking Society reflective of the whole profession with a strong and recognised Brand
- A stable financial basis

How to get there

- 4.1 To steer our actions over the next three years the following are needed:
- Ongoing review of our selection and appointment processes
 - A new communications and engagement strategy driving clear and regular communications with membership, government, partners and the sector
 - An equality and diversity strategy
 - increased capacity within the Society and focus on developing the next generation of leaders
 - Regular monitoring of a clear work programme and priorities to focus energy and effort for maximum impact

5 Activity Plan: 2019 to 2024

5.1 Our business plan is a five year plan that we will review every three years. Activities are grouped into short term (within the next year), medium term (within the next three years) and longer term (either ongoing activity or deliverables likely to be beyond three years). Each activity has a lead Board member with support members indicated. Key deliverables are listed with any financial implications identified (to follow).

Short term: within the next year

| Action | Lead | Support | Deliverables |
|---|-------------------------------|--|---|
| 1. A new Communications and Engagement Strategy aligned to Business Plan and Board priorities and meeting the needs of membership, including refreshing and communicating a clear, relevant and agreed purpose for the Society which provides clarity to communicate the values of the Society to membership, government and key partners | Communications Manager | Chair, Presidential Team & Secretary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft consultation document for Board approval Autumn 2019 • Adoption by Board Spring 2020 |
| 2. Strengthen the regional structure of POS by piloting a new paid for support role to help leads in each region to engage with membership | Senior Vice President & Chair | Communications Manager & Policy Manger | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft scope of role for Board approval Autumn 2019 • Appointment by Spring 2020 • Work programme to support Regional Leads from Summer 2020 |

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|---|-------|----------------------------|---|
| 3. Updated and clear Job Descriptions for all Board and Society roles to support elections at Conference 2020 | Chair | Policy Manager & Secretary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft consultation document for Board approval Autumn 2019 • Adoption by Board Spring 2020 |
| 4. Review new selection and election process for appointment to Society roles | Chair | Presidential Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft to Board Winter 2019 • Any changes agreed by Board for implementation Spring 2020 |

Medium term: within the next three years

| Action | Lead | Support | Deliverables |
|--|-------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Investigate the potential for and design of a more systematic offer of support and mentoring to future leaders at all levels within our membership | President | Presidential Team & POS NOVUS Chair | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft consultation document for Board approval Spring 2020 • Adoption by Board Autumn 2020 |
| 2. Establish an Equality and Diversity Strategy to drive a more representative Board and all POS posts/roles. Monitor and report to Board on equality and diversity stats within our senior roles annually | President | POS NOVUS Chair & Policy Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft consultation document for Board approval Summer 2020 • Adoption by Board Autumn 2020 |
| 3. Work with key partners to map where POS is most active and where effective | Secretariat | Policy Manager, Communications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present to Board Summer 2020 |

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| support is provided for public sector planners. Identify where 'gaps' exist that could benefit from POS support | | Manager & Presidential Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activity plan for POS support adopted Autumn 2020 |
| 4. Develop a resource pack for Chief Planners and LPA planners to go to their local schools/colleges and talk about career and value of planning to young people | Policy Manager | Communications Manager, POS NOVUS Chair & Presidential Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft for Board approval Summer 2020 Launch Conference 2021 |

Longer term: ongoing activity or deliverables likely to be beyond three years

| Action | Lead | Support | Deliverables |
|---|-----------------------|---|--|
| 1. Support RTPI Chief Planners research by developing a set of competencies and skills using POS network of public sector planners | Policy Manager | President, Chair & Policy Forum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing programme relating to work by RTPI |
| 2. Support POS NOVUS in increasing their presence the sector | POS NOVUS Chair | Presidential Team | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing programme |
| 3. Develop a long-term strategic partnership with Future Cities Catapult Commission to enable the dissemination and take-up of digital technologies within the sector | Senior Vice President | POS NOVUS Chair, Chair & Policy Manager | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing programme |

Appendix

Ongoing Activities

- Maintain a strong and active alignment with key partners across planning and built environment sector – RTPI/RIBA/RICS/BPF/LGA etc
- Keep up to date the Society's Manifesto for the Government and specific papers on key manifesto proposals as required.
- Chair & Presidential team to have regular meetings with key politicians and officials to promote the Society's manifesto. This includes meetings with both government and opposition politicians.
- Ensure that the Society is represented on any relevant working parties, commissions, think tanks etc. to promote the Society's manifesto.
- Keep the membership fee under review
- Through the website keep members informed of the activities of the Society including consultations on Government policy, meetings with ministers and meetings with other national bodies.
- Maintain the quarterly Policy Forum meetings to engage the wider membership and enable them to contribute to policy formulation.
- Hold an annual POS Conference which showcases good practice and provides networking opportunities.
- Hold an annual Joint Conference with the BPF.
- POSe to hold free events in each region to stimulate interest in the Society. Leads in each region to liaise with POSe and hold at least two regional events annually.
- In partnership with Planning magazine maintain annual POS award for Best LPA of the Year Cup as part of their planning awards.
- To draw the attention of POS members to government consultations and through the relevant POS groups and specialists to prepare responses for agreement by the Board and, where possible, to circulate to membership in advance of deadlines.
- Maintain regular meetings with key sectoral organisations and professional bodies to develop a common understanding and where possible a common position on the Society's manifesto, government consultations and to promote these with politicians and the media.
- To prepare and keep up to date (review every 3 years) a 5-year business plan including a medium term financial plan. Treasurer to prepare and roll forward annually and prepare monitoring reports for each Board meeting.
- Identify opportunities for Planning Officers Society Enterprises (POSe) to support the Society's aims.