



National Planning Forum

INSPIRING PLANNING

THE NATIONAL PLANNING FORUM LTD

The cross-sector network for key organisations engaged in spatial planning

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Business Plan 2022

(as at 2 November 2021)

www.natplanforum.org

INTRODUCTION

1. The Forum occupies a unique position by bringing together organisations representing those working in planning, in business, local government, the professions, the third sector and planners in government, to explore both agreement and difference across the sectors in developing a “fit for purpose” spatial planning system. It is not a consultative body, because its individual members are themselves consultees, advocates and lobbyists; and, although it has on occasions advocated a particular position, its main role is to foster and explore cross-sectoral experience and issues.
2. It operates according to the following principles:
 - A company limited by guarantee established for the principle purpose of enabling its members to evaluate, explore and exchange information about town and country planning in order to achieve quality outcomes that enhance productivity, well-being, the environment and sustainability for the benefit of the wider public. To this end the Forum holds events, undertakes research, publishes information and reports, liaises with, and works with, professionals within the built environment sector and collaborates with other individuals and organisations.
 - Membership is open to:
 - National and representative organisations with an interest in town and country planning operating within one of the five categories of (a) business, (b) professional associations, (c) government agencies, (d) third sector organisations and (e) local government. The Board is responsible for ensuring a degree of both balance and equality of representation across the sectors;
 - All full members will be entitled to vote at the annual general meeting
 - The Board of Directors will be appointed by the Forum members and they will appoint from their number a chairperson, a vice-chair and a treasurer
 - The secretary will be, ex-officio, a non-voting member of the Board
 - The Management Committee will be appointed by the Forum members and will include representation from each of the five sectors
 - An annual general meeting will be held to receive the annual accounts, set the annual subscription rate; approve changes to the rules, elect directors and the management committee and approve a Directors’ report
 - The Board will present for approval to annual meetings of the membership:
 - An annual report
 - A statement of accounts
 - A proposed activity plan and budget; and
 - A recommendation on the annual subscription level needed to fund the business plan

- The Management Committee will be responsible for the day to day operation and programme of the Forum in all its aspects.

THE PAST YEAR

3. The Forum has:
 - A Management Committee comprising five sector representatives who agree and take responsibility for the programme of Forum meetings;
 - An on-going work programme that is monitored against performance at each meeting of the Board and the Management Committee;
 - A formal accounting system, together with an agreed set of financial protocols;
 - A set of agreed job descriptions delineating the split of responsibilities between the Board and the Management Committee;
 - A detailed risk register, which will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis;
 - A forward-looking investment policy;
4. During 2021, the Forum’s Management Committee has continued to regularly monitor activity and finance, whilst adapting its current programme to deal with the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic.
5. The Forum’s website (www.natplanforum.org) is maintained directly by the Secretary and presentations from all events are available to download immediately after the events have happened, together with event recordings wherever possible. The mailing list of member organisation representatives is continuously updated ensuring that the Forum remains GDPR compliant.
6. In 2021 the Forum planned to hold four events which would be through a “virtual” video platform. Three successful events have been held, with the fourth scheduled to take place immediately prior to the AGM on 7 December.
7. In the light of the pandemic and following advice received from the Forum’s accountants, the Board of Directors made the decision that subscriptions for 2020/21 would not be invoiced as at 1 April and that, depending on the position later in the year, a half year’s subscription would be invoiced to cover the period up until to 31 March 2021. The number of organisations who renewed their membership at this time was lower than expected. As a result, the Management Committee and the Board reconsidered the business plan income target for 2021 and reduced the income expected and sought to cover some of the shortfall by attracting separate event sponsors for the four scheduled events up to the end of the current financial year. To date, this sponsorship is on track to meet its target income.
8. There continued to be discussions with a number of organisations about topic areas for future research and, the Board agreed to participate in and support, with other organisations, the third UCL research study “Local Authority Direct Delivery of Housing III” which was published in September 2021.

9. A Mailchimp survey was prepared, and member organisations were asked to respond to provide views on topics for both future events and future research projects. Unfortunately, there was a very low response to the survey.

THE FUTURE PROGRAMME

10. Over recent years the NPF has continued to hold well attended Forum events with programmes that have generally been well received and have enabled participants to hear from, and engage with, well-informed presenters discussing up to the minute issues.
11. It remains the case that there is nowhere other than the Forum that provides the opportunity for a wide range of organisations engaged in the business of planning, both large and small, and covering the five sectors, to discuss issues together in an environment focussed on the role of planning and its effectiveness. Such events are sometimes held under 'Chatham House rule' conditions. Often the value of Forum meetings is for the individual organisation members who attend (who may not be those who regularly engage with the senior echelons of the planning world) and those for whom the Forum is an opportunity to take the temperature of the planning world, as a whole; to see the bigger picture and to receive feedback on the success of particular initiatives or programmes. There is a particular opportunity for younger or more junior staff of member organisations to participate in Forum events, not only contributing but broadening their horizons and taking advantage of the networking opportunities.
12. To continue its successful role in the future, the Forum needs to ensure that its programme:
 - Remains topical and is attractive to members – creating a buzz and a sense that not being there means missing out;
 - Attracts the leading, best, most informed, engaged and controversial presenters on the most important and challenging topics;
 - Delivers quality rather than quantity, and encourages debate and discussion within the Forum with a chance to hear all sides of the argument;
 - Continues to provide better follow through in terms of access to presentations and reports of proceedings directly to members through the website;
 - Improves communication and engagement with more regular news updates and use of social media;
 - Uses its USP of a cross-sectoral network, which embraces a vast range of experience, to provide support, input and thought leadership to the wider world of town and country planning, without usurping the roles of its individual members, particularly in their lobbying and member-support activities.
13. The work programme proposed for the period 2022 will seek to build on the energy and experience which the Board of Directors and the Management Committee have shown in re-stating the role and reputation of the Forum, whilst ensuring that robust administrative

systems are in place to achieve an efficient, low-cost operation, improving the service to members and providing support to the wider planning world.

14. The Forum has noted that holding events virtually has allowed for much greater engagement with planners from outside of the London/South East area and for many younger professionals to participate. These factors will have to be considered in any discussions around the long-term future format for meetings and it is hoped that those attending the AGM in December 2021 can participate in this discussion before a final decision about the longer-term meeting format is taken.
15. The work programme's priorities for 2022 are:
 - Assessing how the NPF responds to a return to more 'normal' conditions following the successful Covid-19 vaccination programme and, in light of this review, managing the transition to the post-pandemic approach.
 - Arranging Forum events that contribute to the discussion about current issues and best practice in planning. Four Forum meetings are proposed for 2022. The first Forum meeting of the year will be held in February and three further meetings will be held in June, September and December 2022. The themes for each event will be announced closer to the dates but the intention will be to continue providing topical, thought-provoking speakers discussing up-to-the minute issues, providing updates on new legislation and outlining current research and future scanning ideas and thinking. Event sponsors will be sought for all events to offset costs
 - Maintaining the Supporting Planning Fund with the object of offering exciting opportunities for the Forum to contribute to continuing and new research and project work with a focus on projects that would deliver a practical application/outcome; and to support new and emerging best practice and policy development where a cross-sectoral approach is a key component.
 - Continuing the work of firmly establishing the Forum by embedding first class administrative, management and financial systems; growing the membership and establishing good relationships with sponsors.
 - Seeking to raise the profile of the Forum and its activities through the planning, environment and development press.

2022-2023 BUDGET

	<i>Budgeted 21-22 *</i> £	<i>Actuals 21-22 (to date)</i> £	<i>Budgeted 22-23</i> £
Income			
Subscription income (1)	4,500	3,000	3,000
Associate subscription income (1)	1,200	0	
Event sponsorship income (2)	2,000	1,500	2,000
Interest	0	0	0
Total	7,700	4,500	5,000
Expenditure			
Secretarial (3)	7,000	3,500	7,000
Website general maintenance (4)	1020	720	1,000
Promotion/Awards	250	0	0
Forum meeting expenditure (5)	0	0	100
Board & Man Comm expenses (6)	0	0	100
Forum travel (7)	150	0	0
Accounting/tax/SAGE system (8)	936	108	950
Publications	0	0	0
Insurance	280	0	280
Contingency	250	100	100
Total	9,886	4,428	9,530
Supporting Planning Fund (inc research & bursaries (10)	5,000	1,000	5,000
Income over Expenditure	-7,186	-928	-9530
Reserves			
Bfwd (at 31 March 2021)	54,729,80		

*Revised budget for 2021-22 agreed by the Directors on 10 June 2021

NOTES TO BUDGET:

- (1) 2021-22 budget based on 15 organisations @ £300 + 4 associate subscriptions @ £300
- (2) Event sponsorship – attracting one sponsor for each event @ £500
- (3) Agreed annual fee for secretariat services;
- (4) Agreed annual cost of hosting and maintaining website, including provision of safety certificate;
- (5) Assumes if meetings are face-to-face that NPF members will once again be able to provide free venues for meetings and some free catering;
- (6) Assumes Board and Management Committee meetings will continue to be virtual, but also covers some minor company expenses, such as Companies House fees
- (7) Travel expenses for secretariat and for speakers at face-to-face meetings who are unable to re-claim expenses from other sources;
- (8) Preparation of end of year accounts for Companies House by Torr Waterfield and annual cost of SAGE accounts software