



THE NATIONAL PLANNING FORUM LTD

The cross-sector network for key organisations engaged in spatial planning
Local Government | Professions | Business | Planning in Government | Third Sector

Evaluate | Explore | Exchange

Business Plan 2023

(as at 28 October 2022)

www.natplanforum.org

The National Planning Forum Ltd

Limited Company No 11118336

Registered in England and Wales

Registered office: The Croft, 81 Walton Road, Aylesbury, HP21 7SN

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 2022, the Forum's Management Committee has continued to regularly monitor activity and finance, whilst adapting its current programme to return to face to face Forum meetings wherever possible.
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 2022 the Forum planned to hold four events which would be on a face to face basis with a view only option offered through the Zoom video platform. Three successful events have been held although one was subsequently moved to an entirely virtual platform because of a poor response to face to face attendance.
7. The two face to face events held to date were hosted by Savills and Lichfields. Allies & Morrison Urban Practitioners had agreed to host the October event, before it moved to a wholly virtual platform, and they have confirmed they would be happy to host on a future occasion. However, receiving sponsorship in kind (ie. venues and catering) has had a detrimental impact on the Forum's overall budgeted income for the year which will need to be addressed by the Management Committee and Board over the next year.
8. There continued to be discussions about topic areas for future research and, the Board has agreed to participate in and support, with other organisations, the fourth UCL research study "Local Authority Direct Delivery of Housing IV" which is due to commence in early 2023.

THE FUTURE PROGRAMME

9. Over recent years the NPF has continued to hold 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.
10. Feedback forms and other anecdotal feedback all shows that the Forum events are welcomed for their topicality, quality of speakers and presentations and level of ensuing discussion.
11. It also 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.
12. However, membership numbers and attendance by Forum members continues to fall with audiences increasingly coming from outside active Forum membership. 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 recordings of proceedings directly to members through the website;
 - Raises the profile of the Forum through improved communication and engagement with more regular news updates and a greater use of social media;
 - Uses its USP as 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 2023 will seek to build on the energy and experience which the Board of Directors and the Management Committee have shown to date 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 need to be considered in discussions around the long-term future format for meetings.

15. The work programme's priorities for 2023 are:

- Reviewing the nature and purpose of Forum events with the aim of increasing attendances through better marketing and raising the profile of the Forum and its activities through the planning, environmental and development press, as well as through social media channels, emphasising the cross-sectoral nature of the Forum and the quality of its discussions.
- Addressing the decline in budgeted income by seeking to grow the membership and establishing/maintaining good on-going relationships with a range of sponsors/hosts
- Maintaining the Supporting Planning Fund with the object of offering 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.

To inform and assist this programme, the intention is to appoint an independent specialist to undertake a structured stakeholder analysis between January-March 2023 with a fixed budget for this purpose being funded from the current reserves.

2023-2024 BUDGET

	<i>Budget 22-23 (agreed at 2021 AGM) £</i>	<i>Actuals 22-23 (to date) £</i>	<i>Proposed Budget 23-24 £</i>
Income			
Subscription income (1)	3,000	2,700	3,000
Associate subscription income (1)	0	600	900
Event sponsorship income (2)	2,000	0	0
Interest	0	0	0
Total	5,000	3,300	3,900
Outgoings			
Secretarial (3)	7,000	3,500	7,000
Website general maintenance (4)	1,000	905	1,000
Promotion/Awards	0	0	0
Forum meeting expenditure (5)	100	0	100
Board & Man Comm expenses (6)	100	0	0
Forum travel (7)	0	23	100
Accounting/tax/SAGE system (8)	950	90	1,000
Publications	0	0	0
Insurance	280	0	300
Bank charges	0	25	60
Contingency	100	0	100
Total	9,530	4,543	9,660
Income over Outgoings	-4,530	-1,243	-5,760
Supporting Planning Fund (inc research & bursaries (9))	5,000	1,000	1,000
Stakeholder analysis contract within final quarter of 2022-23	10,000	0	0
Reserves			
<i>as at 10.10.22</i>		£50,166.48	

NOTES TO BUDGET:

- (1) 2023-24 budget based on 10 organisations @ £300 + 3 associate subscriptions @ £300
- (2) Event sponsorship – 2022-23 budget was based on attracting one sponsor for each event @ £500. However, now events are held on a face to face basis again the sponsorship provided covers costs of venue and catering rather than a £500 sponsorship fee
- (3) Agreed annual fee for secretariat services. No invoices received for 2022-23 to date but current cost shown in figures
- (4) Agreed annual cost of hosting and maintaining website, including provision of safety certificate;
- (5) Assumes if meetings are face to face that sponsorship in kind by hosts will cover free venues for meetings and 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 reclaim expenses from other sources.
- (8) Preparation of end of year accounts for Companies House by Torr Waterfield and annual cost of SAGE accounts software. No invoices received to date but current cost shown in figures
- (9) Commitment made to provide £2,000 over the two year period 2022-24 to support the 4th research project into Local Authority Housing being undertaken by UCL.
- (10) One off expenditure from reserves on a stakeholder analysis contract (indicative budget of £5,000-10,000) to be undertaken within the final quarter of 2022-23

28.10.22.