



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 2024

(as at 3 March 2024)

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 principal 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.
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;

THE PAST YEAR

4. The Board had previously agreed to participate in and support, with other organisations, the fourth UCL research study “Local Authority Direct Delivery of Housing IV” which was published and launched in January 2024, at an event organised by the Forum.
5. The work programme’s priorities for 2023 were:
- To review 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.
 - Address the decline in budgeted income by seeking to grow the membership and establishing/maintaining good on-going relationships with a range of sponsors/hosts
 - Maintain 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 this end the Board appointed an independent specialist to undertake a structured stakeholder analysis in the Spring of 2023, with a fixed budget for this purpose being funded from the current reserves.

6. Their final report included a series of recommendations which focused on website/social media, organisation of Forum events, re-engagement with existing members and suggestions for engaging with future members.
7. Through the second half of 2023, the Management Committee and the Board of Directors discussed the way forward and agreed that the best approach was to split the current

Secretary's role and appoint a dedicated public affairs organisation to focus on organising, advertising and running Forum events, delivering website and social-media content and with the aim of increasing membership. The Secretary will then focus on the business and financial management of the Forum.

THE FUTURE PROGRAMME

8. Consequently, Concilio were appointed in late December 2023 to focus on turning the organisation around and making it self-sufficient financially (or on the road to being financially self-sufficient) by increasing membership through a focused investment and implementation strategy implemented from 2024.
9. The marketing elements of the Forum will be strengthened through greater use of the website and social media, inviting a wider audience to the Forum meetings and then seeking to convert the attendees to paying members in the various categories.
10. Under the contract Concilio are required to arrange three face-to-face Forum meetings during 2024 plus one virtual event, including developing the themes, guest lists, managing bookings etc – all these tasks being carried out in conjunction with the Management Committee who will regularly review the contract's progress at agreed points in the year.
11. The collaboration between the National Planning Forum and Concilio will seek 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.
12. Concilio are currently proposing events which leverage their political and industry networks to provide expert insight on relevant issues with an audience made up of current and potential NPF members.
13. Programme topics currently under consideration are:
 - Planning Challenges facing mayoral regions
 - National planning reform
 - Unlocking the Green Belt

14. It is considered that this refresh is the best opportunity for the Forum to develop a new sustainable role through 2024 and into the future.
15. The Board has agreed the budget on the basis that the financial year 2024-25 will be a critical year for the survival of the Forum and that the Concilio contract is vital to raising the profile of the Forum and to growing its core membership so that it has a long term sustainable future.

2023-2024 BUDGET

	<i>Budget 23-24 (agreed at Feb 2023 AGM)</i> £	<i>Actuals 23-24 (to date)</i> £	<i>Proposed Budget 24-25</i> £
Income			
Subscription income (1)	3,000	0	4,500
Associate subscription income (1)	900	0	900
Total	3,900	0	5,400
Outgoings			
Secretarial (2)	7,000	5,250	5,000
Website general maintenance (3)	1,000	954	1,225
Promotion/Awards	0	0	0
Forum meeting expenditure (4)	100	0	0
Board & Man Comm expenses (5)	0	16	50
Forum travel (6)	100	0	100
Accounting/tax/SAGE system (7)	1,000	930	1,000
Publications	0	0	0
Insurance	300	308	320
Bank charges	60	60	60
Contingency	100	0	100
Total	9,660	7,518	7,855
Income over Outgoings	-5,760	-7,502	-2,455
Supporting Planning Fund (inc research & bursaries (8)	1,000	1,000	1,000
Stakeholder analysis contract within final quarter of 2022-23 (9)	10,000	9,840	0
Concilio contract for 2024	0	0	12,000
Reserves		£24,423	
<i>as at 01.03.24.</i>			

NOTES TO BUDGET:

- (1) 2024-2025 budget based on 10 organisations @ £300 + 3 associate subscriptions @ £300 as previously with a firm target of 5 further organisations budgeted as joining and a “stretch” target of 10 organisations for Concilio
- (2) Revised annual fee for secretariat services.
- (3) Agreed annual cost of hosting and maintaining website, including provision of safety certificate;
- (4) Assumes if meetings are face to face that sponsorship in kind by hosts will cover free venues for meetings and free catering;
- (5) Assumes Board and Management Committee meetings will continue to be virtual, but also covers some minor company expenses, such as Companies House fees
- (6) Travel expenses for speakers at face to face meetings who are unable to re-claim expenses from other sources.
- (7) Preparation of end of year accounts for Companies House by Torr Waterfield and annual cost of SAGE accounts software.
- (8) Commitment made to provide £2,000 over the two year period 2022-24 to support the 4th research project into Local Authority Housing undertaken by UCL.
- (9) One off expenditure from reserves on a stakeholder analysis contract undertaken in 2023
- (10) Concilio contract for running Forum meetings in 2024

03.03.24.