

Planning Advisory Service update

Purpose of Report

To update on work of Planning Advisory Service (PAS).

Summary

The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) has been active throughout the 2011-12 municipal year delivering events and guidance to help local authorities better understand forthcoming changes to the planning system. This work will continue next year, with added focus on supporting authorities to address the challenges and opportunities resulting from the reforms. Members' feedback is welcomed.

Recommendation

To note the report.

Action

None.

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Planning Advisory Service update

Background

1. The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) has been busy. Throughout 2011-12 we have interacted, at some level, with all English local planning authorities. We have delivered 79 individual events, 7 planning peer challenges, a benchmarking club with 250 local authority members, 6 pilots for options appraisal and service improvement work, 45 councillor briefing sessions, 7 leadership academies and 120 pieces of support for plan-making. Satisfaction (good or very good) is high. An evaluation of the longer term impact of the PAS programme will begin soon.

Current highlights

2. Interest remains high in finding out about changes to the planning system. Current work is on strategic planning and the duty to co-operate; one key point coming out of our recent events is around political awareness, buy-in and leadership on the duty to co-operate.
3. We are also working on an NPPF tool which will help authorities to understand the fit between their adopted plan and the NPPF, what the risks are and what they can do about it to ensure a robust plan which sets the framework for local decision making on planning.
4. Benchmarking work to support authorities in preparing for localised fee setting continues. Whilst we wait for a government decision on this we are contributing to an understanding of how councils can set fees transparently and fairly.

Next year's priorities

5. We intend to move on from 'understanding' the range of planning reforms to focus on helping councils tackle some of the challenges resulting from the reforms and exploiting the opportunities. Following feedback from councils and key partners we intend to keep focussed on helping authorities to get up to date plans in place, consider new models of service delivery to drive good value, high quality planning services and broaden our offer around growth, infrastructure and asset management.

Your input

6. We'd like to know what you think. If you have any feedback about this year's work, or priorities for how PAS can support your council next year, please let us

know. We will circulate a draft of our proposed work programme for next year to Planning Portfolio Holders in mid March.