



Proposal letter sent via e-mail

4th January 2018

Dear xxxx,

PAS Review of Planning Committee at xxxxx Council

Context

xxxx Council (the council) has asked Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to prepare a proposal for a review of the council's planning committee.

The review will look at whether the current structure, scheme of delegation and processes are efficient and effective and whether they meet the needs (current and future) of the Council and its customers. The review will also look at how decision making might be improved whilst allowing for democratic input into the process, relationships between officers and members, and identifying good practice from elsewhere that may be transferable to xxxx council.

How PAS delivers committee reviews

PAS uses its extensive network of peers to deliver its committee reviews. Reviews are delivered by an officer peer/consultant and a councillor peer with experience of planning applications and committees. The peers will review the aspects of the committee agreed with the council (see 'proposal/scope' below), and, based on their own experience and knowledge of good practice, report back on these aspects and make some recommendations for improvement.

Proposal/scope

Rather than deliver a 'black box', PAS works with each individual council to make sure that the review covers the right things. Councils normally find it useful for us to set out some suggestions that can then be tailored to the council's requirements and to focus on the priorities. PAS suggests reviewing the following as a starting point:

1. Purpose:

- The committee's understanding of its purpose (what it is there for).
- Scheme of delegation, process of call-ins, focus and use of resources.

2. Format and process

- Debate and voting.
- Membership, size of the committee, use of substitutes.
- Room layout and facilities.
- Standard of, clarity and layout of committee reports.
- Presentation of committee reports by planning officers.
- Site visits, record-keeping, reporting.

3. The customer experience

- How public engagement is managed.
- Information available to aid public understanding.

4. Roles and responsibilities

- Role of committee members and the relationship of planning committee to other advisory groups.
- The role at planning committee of the portfolio holder.
- Support from officers (planners, legal, committee services, and other expertise).

5. Quality and improvement

- Member training – frequency, in-house, external
- Monitoring and review – how does the committee know it is doing a good job?

The review process

The peers will:

- Review existing materials and compare against their own experience and good practice.
- Attend, as observers, at least one, preferably two planning committees
- Interview a sample of committee members (including Chair and 3 others) and attending officers (Head of DM, legal officer or democratic services officer, one presenting planner)
- Write a concise report responding to the points agreed in the scope, including references to good practice from elsewhere where possible, and recommendations.

Working with Planning Advisory Service

PAS will manage the overall project and in agreement with you select the councillor peer. PAS likes to work closely with councils and the key things we would expect from you are: -

- Select the councillor peer – PAS will offer a selection of available councillor peers for the council to choose from. PAS requires the council to indicate if they have a preference for the political background of the councillor peer.
- To supply any key documents and information to help the team prepare.
- To provide facilities for interviews.
- To assist in managing the availability of interviewees.
- Review and feedback on draft and final reports.

Costs

The total cost for the review breaks down as follows:

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|---|---------------|
| • Officer peer 4 days @ £750 per day; | £3,000 |
| • Councillor peer 3 days @ £300 per day | £780 |
| • plus VAT @ 20% | £756 |
| • estimated expenses @10-15% | £400 |
| • Total | £4,936 |

Timing

It typically takes about 6 weeks to get the PAS team selected and in place (the most time is taken up securing the availability of councillor peers). It is suggested that if we can move quickly we should aim to get a team in place ready to review the first

planning committee on xx/xx/xx, the second on xx/xx/xx, and aim to deliver the final report at the end of xx/xx/xx.

Next steps and contact details

I hope that this proposal meets your requirements. If you have any queries, or wish to talk about anything outlined here in further detail please do not hesitate to get in touch with me. My mobile number is 07917 202319 and I can be contacted by email via martin.hutchings@local.gov.uk.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Hutchings

Improvement Manager
Planning Advisory Service