

Reference	ICN23/July/05
Date	05 July 2023

ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE

INDEPENDENT CONSULTANTS NETWORK

ICN Steering Group Meeting

05 July 2023, 14.00 to 16.00

This meeting was held online.

BW and CS sent apologies.

Attended by:

Pete Lloyd (PL) Chair

Jacqueline Veater (JV)

Andrew Metcalf (AM)

Alyn Nicholls (AN)

Dan Slade (DS) RTPI Policy Manager

Dipty Patel (DP) (attended part) National Events Manger

Apologies from Brian Waters (BW) and Claire Stafford (CS) RTPI ICN Co-ordinator

1. Welcome

- PL welcomed everybody.

2. Update on membership

- DS explained that CS was not set up on the CRM database prior to the meeting, so was unable to provide updated figures.

Actions

CS to send round update on membership numbers after her return from leave.

3. Updates on minutes of the last meeting held on 21/02/2023 and matters arising

a. Online List of Chartered Members

- DS explained that, based on Steering Group feedback, a new RTPI website service is currently being developed that will benefit all RTPI members. DS further confirmed that this project is currently a live, funded project under the Institute's Digital Transformation programme, which is expected to be available before the end of the year.
- The Steering Group reaffirmed their request for the dissemination of contact details across the network, and that this is an ongoing point of concern for the ICN Steering Group.
- DS assured that this project is ongoing and will be provided by the end of the year.

Actions

CS to continue to monitor progress of this project.

b. The Planning Inspectorate

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- PL confirmed there was a meeting on Tuesday with Graham Stallwood. The group noted that complaints have been registered on the forum concerning the speed of appeals.
- AN stated that consistency is an issue and that expectations cannot be managed. Case officer did not know what he should have been doing (i.e. the process of when documents should be submitted and timescales going forward). AN confirmed that a separate note will be produced on this.

Actions

CS to canvas network for questions and share feedback after next meeting.

4. Neighbourhood Planning Funding

- JV stated there is complete silence and lack of communication on funding. It was noted that some locations have funding in place (Parish Councils), but these instances are few and the forums are floundering.
- JV mentioned the precarious position for NP consultants and that there has been a complete pause in many places.

Actions

CS to monitor the forum on this matter.

DS to follow up with his NP contacts that he has discussed this issue with ICN.

CS and DS to chase this issue internally, to mention ICN concerns alongside wider issues.

5. National Planning Conference

- DS clarified that the RTPI has agreed to make some FOC space available for bespoke content for planning consultants (this will be for any consultants and not exclusive to the ICN). DS confirmed that there is limited conference space available, just the main conference room and a second room which will also be used when the main conference breaks out into two streams. FOC availability means the Steering Group do not need to secure sponsorship except to cover any speaker costs.
- DS further noted that making use of the time after the main conference closes will maximise the time planning consultant delegates can attend the main conference or reduce the competition which might mean they prefer to attend other sessions. Alternative times are available on either day, but an additional space room would be required at a charge to the Steering Group, if in fact there is any space available.
- AN registered concern that this detail provided was not what was promised: two breakout sessions on day one of the conference with a preferential rate for that day for ICN members.
- AM commented that this implies that the 'break out session' is not specific to ICN.
- PL commented that ICN members do not need to be at the conference for two days and that the content is not that relevant to consultants. PL emphasised the physical and opportunity cost for ICN members (linking to previous discussion on Neighbourhood Planning lack of work).
- AM questioned the cost.
- Steering Group questioned whether a different date should be considered.

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- AM raised the concern that this event is geared towards big consultancies.
- Steering Group members registered dismay because the proposed arrangements were not as offered by Victoria Hills in communication with PL.

Actions

CS to monitor the development of this event, liaising with RP's team.

6. ICN 2024 Conference

- DP gave update, noting that the priority is to agree the location. This will be a full day conference in either March or April (avoiding Easter).
- PL stated that the location needs to be both interesting and accessible. Leeds is an option but it may be considered too far north.
- AN mentioned previous locations (Oxford, York, Bristol, Chester). The southeast was considered the best option for the next national ICN conference. There is a concentration of members located within this area.
- It was confirmed that the potential options are Milton Keynes, Brighton and Winchester.
- In terms of timing, it was noted to avoid the week after and week before the bank holiday and 25th March to 5th April.
- DP noted her preference is towards the end of April.
- 15th-22nd April was noted as possible dates.
- Earth day mentioned as a potential theme.
- DP mentioned practicalities in terms of funding and sponsorship and the desire to resolve these issues early.
- DP raised the following questions/points:
 - How many plenaries? (4 is max without b/o)
 - Whether the Steering Group would like a plenary sponsor?
 - Ideal to have main room and then separate room with sponsors, lunch, network, exhibitors etc.
 - RTPI will only contribute limited amount for food during drinks reception the evening prior as it is not part of the conference.
- DP confirmed she will circulate a spec sheet for what is possible at these events.
- AN questioned whether sponsorship arrangements would be in the form of packages as the Chester conference. It was noted that the plenary should feature sponsor's logo/ branding on website/exhibition, tickets allocated, and place on a panel.
- Steering Group registered the wish to involve PINS.
- AN stated that Kings Chambers and CMS Law have expressed interest to be involved with the ICN conference. AN further mentioned specialists in BNG.
- DP raised the idea of a BNG session to take advantage of this key subject and timely conference. DP further questioned the possibility of local sponsors.
- AM mentioned Cornerstone Barristers if the Steering Group wish to focus on a locality further south.

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- PL explained that RP had suggested a hybrid event.

Actions

CS to liaise with DP to set up poll on potential locations, on her return from leave.

DP to circulate spec sheet.

7. Networks Review

- DS gave update, confirming that this has been delayed by 3 months.
- DS confirmed that CS will provide progress report to October committee, rather than final proposals.

Actions

CS to monitor and provide further update in due course.

CS to add contract planners as a new category to the Networks Review folder (alongside other new forms of practice that are not covered).

8. Starting your own Private Practice Update

- DS thanked AN for sharing the latest draft of the document and noted the value of this resource to ICN members.
- DS confirmed the next stages of drafting relate to presentation matters in terms of the inclusion of visuals and updating the hyperlinks.
- DS raised the need for legal input on winding up business and returning to salaried employment.
- Steering Group noted reluctance to go back to Myersons for further assistance on a pro bono basis. General practice and commercial law input was required (not planning law).
- Steering Group suggested that RP should find the source from commercial lawyer.
- AN suggested that this updated advice note should be featured in The Planner.
- DS stated that we could liaise internally with Comms.

Actions

The latest draft is to be reviewed internally.

DS to contact RP about lawyer cover for the document.

9. Forum members working for LPAs

- A number of the ICN are working for local authorities.
- Some working case by case, but some more fulsomely.
- AN noted that 30% of work is for Local Authorities. AN further noted that the issue are people who are contracted to local authorities and do not do any other planning work while this is the case. AN noted that he knows someone is not in the RTPI who is in ICN and raised the issue of how to deal with people who are working full time for local government but on temporary contract.
- AM mentioned a 'contract planner'.

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- PL registered their interest on the new phenomenon of contract planners and questioned where they should sit.
- RS advised that he has started to spend 3/5 days on this contract work.

10. AOB

- The Steering Group commented that the Planning Portal fee increase is causing issues and that despite the increase there has been little improvement.
- This issue has been followed up by some members already.