



planning advisory service



Solving the pre application problem

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2nd March 2023

www.pas.gov.uk

The project

- PPA template
- Best practice in PPAs and pre apps
- Review of national fees
- Pre apps fee calculator
- Key principles for pre apps
- National training sessions



Timescales

- **Questionnaires including councillor questionnaire – November 2022**
 - **Research work completed – end of December 2022**
 - **Training events – January – March 2023**
 - **Publication of the findings on the PAS website – March 2023**
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Problem 1 – the fees don't meet cost recovery

- Underestimating how much it costs your council
 - Not understanding your hourly rate
 - Not meeting your budget target due to fee level or lack of take up
 - The Council in effect subsidises the applicant costs
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Problem 2 – Your consultees let you down

- Internal consultees don't treat pre apps as a priority and focus on live applications
 - External consultees either don't respond or insist on their own pre app
 - Performance measures only set for live planning applications
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Problem 3 – You don't give the applicant the service they want

- Case officer plays it safe and is not confident enough to openly discuss their professional views / interpretation
 - Charging schedules and response format are inflexible to the applicant's needs
 - The art of the chat has been replaced by email / formal letter
 - No monitoring through customer feedback
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Problem 4 – you don't have sufficient staff to give a quality service

- The responses are slow because of staff workloads
 - You don't have the experienced “Principal Planners” because they have moved to consultancies or agencies or have left the profession
 - There is no time for internal discussion with managers and colleagues to help problem solve – results in a safety first culture
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Problem 5 – you haven't got the councillor / community engagement right

- There is no clear policy on involving councillors / the wider community in the pre app process
 - Councillors don't understand the pre app process leading to mixed messages to the wider community
 - Confidentiality issues get in the way of genuine engagement
 - Perception that developers don't want councillors involved or officers don't want councillors involved
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Time to vote



↕ Active poll

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What are the biggest problems you face in delivering your pre application service (1 is biggest, 5 is smallest)

1. The fees don't meet cost recovery
2. Your consultees let you down
3. You don't give the applicant the service they want
4. You don't have sufficient staff to give a quality service
5. You don't have the community / councillor engagement right

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Solutions 1 – the fees don't meet cost recovery

- PAS guidance on setting fees and fee comparators
 - Work out a *genuine* hourly rate
 - Think carefully about freebies
 - Charge for the extras e.g. scoping, senior manager etc
 - Benchmark time spent
 - Monitoring and review
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Solutions 2 – Your consultees let you down

- Incorporate consultees as part of fee schedule and ensure the service works for them
 - Consider Service Level Agreements
 - Work with your neighbours to ensure consistency of approach
 - Ensure consultees sign up to a PPA so they own the commitment
 - Involve consultees in monitoring and review
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Solutions 3 – You don't give the applicant the service they want

- Use agents' / developer forums to ask them
 - Monitor and review – see PAS guidance
 - PAS guidance on best practice examples
 - Speak to those you can trust
 - Demonstrate how the income is being invested back into the Planning service
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Solutions 4 – you don't have sufficient staff to give a quality service

- Sell the service not only to potential applicants but to your own senior management team
 - Ringfence pre app fees to the Planning service
 - Sell yourselves as a proactive council to attract the best talent
 - Use income to bring in technical specialisms and additional planners
 - Backfill posts so the best staff get the best work
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Solutions 5 – you haven't got the councillor / community engagement right

- Incorporate pre apps as part of regular discussions with Chair / Portfolio Holder
 - Get your messaging right e.g. through codes of good practice, website etc
 - Best practice in member / public briefings
 - Member training on pre apps
 - Discuss at agents' / developer forums
 - Offer different options for engagement
 - Learn from those who do it well
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Future events

- The role of councillor and community engagement in pre apps – 13th March @ 10am
 - Monitoring and reviewing your pre app service – 14th March @ 10am
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