



planning advisory service



# Planning Peer Reviews: delivering planning reform for LPAs

**2 March 2023**

**[www.pas.gov.uk](http://www.pas.gov.uk)**

# Questions for our session today

1) The Peer Review model: what is it and why do it?

- the what, how and why for LPAs

2) What did I get from a review?

- Sarah Scannell (Birmingham) and Tracey Darke (Shropshire)

3) What should or could peer reviews focus on this year?

- some issues and opportunities for the coming year
    - in terms of planning reforms?
    - in terms of delivery?
    - can we measure it more effectively?
-

# What is a Peer Review (or Peer Challenge)?

## The Peer Challenge Model

- team of peers (officers & members) currently working in authorities
- provide challenge and share learning through a 3-4 day review “onsite”
- produce a report with recommendations for improvement

## The LGA Peer Challenge programme

- managed and delivered by the sector for the sector
  - focuses on driving improvement (and efficiency)
  - proportionate and tailored to needs of each authority
  - “flagship” corporate peer challenge (fully subsidised by LGA)
  - service specific challenges inc. Children’s, ASS, HR, Finance, Planning
-

# What it is not

- It is not a sector-owned form of inspection
  - It does not deliver a scored assessment
  - It is not driven by external requirements or a standard set of KLOE
  - It is not reported to Government
  
  - But we do expect local authorities to publish the final report (usually on their website) so it is made publicly available
-

# How it works

- Peers at the heart process
  - A 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' role
    - challenging practice and sharing knowledge and experience
    - building capacity, confidence and sustainability
  - In practice this means:
    - **Scoping:** LPA sets the focus with PAS advice
    - **Preparation:** background material, position statement, recruit team, set schedules for onsite work
    - **On site work:** 3-4 days inc workshops, meeting officers, elected members and other stakeholders
    - **Feedback:** asap on final day of the site visit, with a full written report within 3 weeks
    - **Follow up:** PAS support and six month check in
-

# Themes of a planning review

- **Vision and leadership** - integrating planning within corporate working to support delivery of corporate objectives
  - **Performance and Management** - skills and resources, value for money, and effectiveness of processes and decision-making.
  - **Community engagement** – community leadership role and aspirations, how planning helps deliver these.
  - **Partnership engagement** – balancing priorities and resources to deliver shared/agreed priorities.
  - **Achieving outcomes** - leveraging national and local planning policy to deliver outcomes required.
-

# Why host a planning peer review? (theory)

## Development Management

- Performance and resilience
- Proportionate decision making
- Staffing structures & workload, supporting services
- External perceptions, relationships and customer service

## Plan Making

- Delivery of an existing plan and its vision, eg climate change, regen targets, etc
- Development of a new plan, risks, weaknesses, future trends

## Planning Committee

- Conduct and skills
  - Member-officer relationships with
  - Public perceptions of the “the shop window” of the service
-

# Why host a planning peer review? (practice)

- Vehicle for change and improvement
    - Heads of Planning often know what is needed!
    - Require evidence, support and consensus building
    - Need an agreed action plan and resources to deliver it
  - Corporate buy in from wider authority
    - Time and focus of Leader, Chief Exec and CLT
    - Planning needs a seat at the top table
  - Relationship building and organisational capacity in the team
    - Pressure on service and individuals
    - Need to feel valued and see the bigger picture
    - Building a sense of purpose and “team spirit”
-



# What I got from a planning review....



Planning Improvement Peer Challenge

**Birmingham City Council**

20-22 November 2019

Sarah Scannell, AD Planning  
Birmingham City Council

What was happening before the review

What happened during the review

What has happened since

# Looking ahead: planning reform



## Change and innovation

- LURB
  - NPPF Prospectus and further changes
  - NDMP
  - Environment Act duties
  - Capacity and capability
  - Local Government re-organisation
-

# What could all this mean in practice?

- New ways of doing things and new processes
    - Plan making system and supplementary plans
    - Digital planning and prop tech
    - EOR, Infrastructure Levy, design codes
  - New things to learn or skills to develop
    - Design, ecology and biodiversity skills
    - technical skills (data analysis, digital, GIS)
  - Stretching and testing existing services
    - recruitment of new skills and / or refocusing existing capacity
-

# Group exercise

1. In light of reforms and changes ahead, what is focus for peer reviews focus in 2023/24?
    - DM and delivery or Local plans?
    - Skills and capacity of the service?
  2. What would this mean in reviewing your service?
    - Upskilling and reskilling existing team?
    - Shifting resources or changing focus?
    - Working more collaboratively across councils?
  3. Can we measure impact & change more effectively?
    - what would you expect to see change?
-

# Any immediate feedback .....

- Yes or no to a peer review?
  - A clear focus or not?
  - Yes or no to becoming a peer
-

# For more information

- Email us on [pas@local.gov.uk](mailto:pas@local.gov.uk)
  - See our website <https://www.local.gov.uk/latest-news-pas>
  - Engage over Twitter @pas\_team
-