

Future of Neighbourhood Planning Tendering Event

Q&A

Q1. Is mediation with local planning authorities likely to be in scope of the new contract or is it just an issue in some areas?

A. The need for mediation is just an issue in some areas and therefore likely to arise because we have over 2,000 groups neighbourhood planning and there are likely to be some relationship challenges. Sometimes there may be a need for the Contractor to intervene and find out what's happening.

Q2. The relationship with the development sector is challenging and they can sometimes be quick to challenge any weakness in a neighbourhood plan which can be unhelpful. To what extent will the new contract address the need to improve this relationship?

A. This is a challenge. . Neighbourhood planning is not going away and it has cross party support. Therefore, there is a need to for any Contractor to understand the development sector and what they can do to help this industry's understanding of Neighbourhood Planning, as well as helping neighbourhood planning groups understand what commercial drivers might be at play .

Q3. Can you provide some further clarity on the diversity of outcomes required for any new contract?

A. Ministerial priorities are clear on what we are doing in terms of housing. Looking at feedback from the passage of the Neighbourhood Planning Bill, it is clear that design is an important outcome(s), along with helping communities in deprived areas. We will look at this in more detail and decide what we will require to be delivered.

Q4. Are you considering adding an element of earlier support and capacity building into the contract to deal with the uncertain pipeline of groups?

A. We are not closed to that idea and are open to such suggestions from the market. We recognise that capacity building is a start-up issue especially for neighbourhood forums.

Q5. Can the contract include support for low carbon neighbourhood plans?

A. It's good when neighbourhood planning groups do this but it's different from what DCLG as a client wants to pay for the contract to deliver. We do not want to prescribe what plans must do and risk losing the diversity of outcomes in doing so.

Q6. Do you have the data that tells you the tools that have worked well, or are you looking for the Contractor to provide this?

A. It's really important that we have customer feedback on what has worked well and it's helpful if the Contractor puts forward ideas as the market moves forward. We see the benefits of 'add ons' / innovative ideas as we always need other things to be done and have the infrastructure in place to facilitate these. We are keen to remove barriers of entry for suppliers and improve flexibility so are keen for the market to let us know what these are.

Q7. What is next in the consultation process?

A. We will consider the feedback we have received to date and decide what the next stages will be., We will provide a formal update to the market as and when appropriate, but in the meantime are happy for you to provide further thoughts and ideas..

Q8. Have you got a notion of the envisaged scale of groups that you would like us to work with by 2020/21? There are thousands of potential groups out there that may start the neighbourhood planning process.

A. We have already met the Manifesto commitment of helping 1,400 groups so it's not a numbers game. Numbers in themselves don't indicate success or failure, it is more to do with the success or failure of plans, but we may have to look at prioritising who gets support.

Q9. Do you envisage that the next contract is going to be tougher to get started?

A. There are still lots of groups out there that may start neighbourhood planning and they will need support. We will have to identify them and manage the pipeline going forward and this will be a real challenge.

Q10. Are we looking at a single, packaged support contract or multiple contracts?

A. This has yet to be decided. We are keen to keep this as simple and flexible as possible bearing in mind that 'need' is the most important factor, and having multiple contracts can make the contract management process more challenging for both sides. However, we also need to consider a clear separation of duties between approval and payments to mitigate against potential fraud.

Q11. Is there a contradiction between a risk-averse approach to fraud and supporting neighbourhood forums?

A. There is a difference between giving support and giving cash and you need to be clear on what you are doing and know who your customer is.

Q12. What are your thoughts on having an Accountable Body to aggregate and manage neighbourhood forums?

A. This is a good idea and could take away some of the issues that we face, such as the challenges with fiscal annularity.

Q13. Has the Government changed its attitude to funding face to face support?

A. We need to understand what works for groups, especially neighbourhood forums, and sometimes face to face support works best. However, the issue we may face is prioritising who receives face to face support and the cost benefit of different approaches.