

Egan Review of Skills

A Consultation Paper

Background

The "Egan Review of Skills" was announced by the Deputy Prime Minister on 8 April 2003. Its primary focus is to consider the skills that built environment professionals need to help deliver the vision and aims set out in the "Sustainable Communities Plan: Building for the Future".

Approach being taken

In taking forward his remit, Sir John Egan has established a Task Group of individuals with broad experience across the sustainable communities agenda. He aims to:

- Clarify what 'sustainable community' means and how progress towards achieving a sustainable community might be measured in terms that are understandable to professionals and the public alike;
- Clarify the role of local authorities in delivering sustainable communities within their areas, including their responsibility to provide leadership and vision for all key players (including developers, local communities, etc);
- Look in detail at planning processes from both the developer's and the local authority's perspectives and identify areas where these can be made more efficient, effective, and collaborative;

and

- Consider the factors that encourage private developers to invest in particular areas, and the action local authorities need to take to create an environment conducive to investment that delivers sustainable communities.

The above four steps will enable a better, clearer and more widely accepted understanding of what kind of future communities we are trying to achieve

and what processes are needed to achieve them. Sir John and the Task Group consider that these are the essential foundations from which to address the issue of skills necessary to deliver our future communities.

So far, the Task Group has identified over 100 occupations, including built environment professions that are involved in the three key stages of delivery (development, implementation and maintenance) across the key components of a sustainable community.

These are:

- housing and the built environment,
- transport and connectivity,
- economy,
- social & cultural,
- environmental,
- services, and governance.

The Task Group is also concerned to ensure that skills and training issues relevant to local authority elected members (particularly Planning Committee members) should be considered and addressed. The Review recognises that better planning will make an important contribution to delivery of sustainable communities although it is only one of the aspects that needs to be considered.

It also recognises that significant changes to the planning system are already in the pipeline (the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill currently before Parliament) and has concluded that the focus of its work should be on improving current and proposed processes, rather than further legislative change.

Issues on which views and comments are sought

Sir John and the Task Group would welcome views on all or any of the issues set out below.

General approach, leadership and process

- The general approach described above assumes that simply 'skilling up' for delivery whilst maintaining existing cultures, systems and processes is unlikely to achieve the step change envisaged in the Sustainable Communities Plan. Do you agree?
- Do you consider that local authorities should take the lead role in co-ordinating delivery of the sustainable communities agenda? If not, who is better placed to do this?
- What changes could be made to the process by which developers bring forward proposals for major development projects and to the way local authorities consider and reach decisions, which would:
 - bring greater certainty and speed of decision;
 - bring greater understanding and uniformity in processes across different local planning authorities;
 - and engender a more collaborative approach to planning from the outset between key stakeholders, including local communities?

Professional skills

A range of professions/occupations have a core role in delivering sustainable communities - including built environment professionals (architects, planners, urban designers, highways engineers, surveyors etc), developers and local authority officers.

- Do you consider that there are generic skills, knowledge and behaviours that all should have? If so what are these?
- Are the current distinctions between professions/occupations appropriate for delivery of 21st century sustainable communities? If not is there a need for new or differently defined professions?
- Is the current approach to education and training across the core professions delivering the right skills, knowledge and behaviours? If not -
 - What changes need to be made - at undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing professional development level?
 - Is there a case for some kind of crosscutting foundation course for all core professions?
 - Who should deliver and benchmark such a course?
- What should the role of the professional institutions and institutes be in shaping and delivering the right skills for the future?
- Is there a shortage of people with appropriate skills, knowledge and behaviours among the core professions? If so which professions are experiencing the greatest shortage against demand?
- Are the shortages applicable both to the public and the private sectors? What evidence do you have for any shortages? What do you believe are the reasons for any shortages in supply among the core professions and how can these be addressed - in the short, medium and long terms?
- Is there a need to rebrand the core professions engaged in delivering sustainable communities to make them more attractive to a wide range of possible new entrants, from school children to those in mid career looking for a new direction?
- Do you consider that local authority staff (members and officers) and built environment professionals have the right

economic/financial skills, knowledge and culture to work positively with developers in delivering improvements to local communities?

- How and by whom could any omission in training and knowledge be addressed?
- Outside the core professions, there are a number of other groups that have a role to play in delivering sustainable communities eg educators, health professionals, police officers. What education, training or information should be made available to these groups and how could this best be delivered?
- Do you think it would be helpful if elected members and local authorities were offered training in delivering sustainable communities?
- Do you believe that this ought to be compulsory? Who should provide this training?

Other

- Do you believe that the development industry is sufficiently informed about or committed to sustainable development?
- How do you believe any gap in expertise can best be remedied?

Timing and format of responses

The Review welcomes your responses to the consultation questions by close of business **Friday 28 November 2003**.

Responses **should** be as brief as possible (maximum 4 sides of A4).

We would prefer electronic submissions where possible. We request that you indicate in the body of your response: whether you are content for all or any of your response to be reproduced (or quoted) and attributed to you solely in connection with the Egan Skills Review and for no other purpose;

or whether you wish your response to be treated confidentially and not reproduced or quoted for any purpose.

You should be aware that if a preference is not indicated, all responses received may be made public and in the case of electronic responses, general confidentiality disclaimers that often appear at the end of e-mails will be disregarded.

Responses should be submitted by:

E-mail: eganreview@communities.gsi.gov.uk (In the e-mail 'subject' box please type the text: Consultation response: name of organisation/individual)

Mail: Egan Review Secretariat Consultation response
Zone 3/E1
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU
Facsimile: 020 7944 3899