

# **SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK 4 THINK PIECE – BLOG – FUTURE CHIEF PLANNING OFFICERS**

## **Introduction**

The Scottish Government is keen to bring together views and ideas from a wide range of sectors and to explore the priorities Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4) should address.

In the twenty-fourth in a series of Think Pieces, Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS), sets out its thoughts on Scotland2050 and specifically on future Chief Planning Officers. The opinions expressed are that of the author and we hope that they will stimulate debate and discussion.

## **The issues and opportunities**

Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) has consistently and robustly supported the appointment of statutory Chief Planning Officers during the Parliamentary discussions on the Planning Bill. We are pleased that the suggestion has been followed through in the new Planning Act and we are happy to contribute to the ongoing, detailed discussions with Scottish Government and other stakeholders prior to full implementation across Scotland.

HOPS has always stressed that designating Chief Planning Officers was not to be seen as a matter of professional status or an imposed officer structure or hierarchy. It was about planning being at the forefront of council planning and investment plans and being an enabler and influencer on the corporate priorities on place making, economic development and infrastructure delivery.

Planning has a central and pivotal role in shaping places for the future and linking in to other related strategies on health, size, scale, well-being, sustainability and climate change. To maximise the holistic nature of planning and the wider contributions it can make the creation of Chief Planning Officers is an essential requirement. This will help to ensure that local authorities take planning and place into account when making strategic decisions about investment, asset management, resources and integrated service delivery.

The role of Chief Executives is also critical in this process to ensure that this enhanced and collaborative role can be harnessed effectively for the delivery of corporate goals and priorities.

Clearly officer structures and the configuration of services within councils is a matter for individual councils to consider taking account of their size, scale, local issues and priorities and their geographical make up. The concept of a Chief Planning Officer is, however, transferrable to all councils regardless of size, and is seen as an essential pre-requisite to implementing the whole range of agreed and emerging planning reforms. The time is right for such an initiative to be implemented in full across Scotland.

## Summary

### *Short term (next 10 years) — what **will** happen?*

In the short term, the formal designation of Chief Planning Officers will become the norm in all councils and the role and contributions made to council wide priorities and proposals will be well understood and evidenced. The post will also support improved planning performance initiatives and enhance the ability of planning to support the delivery of broader outcomes across council areas.

### *Long term — what **could** happen?*

In the long term the contribution of planning and planners to the wider economic and environmental agendas will become even more critical and influential and forward thinking , and innovative councils will seize that further opportunity to rebalance and resource planning functions and activities.

### *Overall what **should** happen?*

The concept of Chief Planning Officers is embraced by all Scottish Councils and they are recognised as the strategic thinkers and lead players in achieving council ambitions in the critical areas of health, well- being, economy, place making and climate change

**It is critical that Chief Planning Officers are represented at the top corporate table to lead and influence the various environmental and economic agendas which will face councils over the next 10 years.**

## Biography

Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) is the representative organisation for senior planning officers from Scotland's 32 local authorities, 2 national park authorities and 4 strategic development planning authorities.

The purpose of HOPS is to:

- Promote the profile of public sector land use planning
- Support and promote excellence in planning leadership
- Ensure the delivery of a culture of continuous improvement in planning authorities, and
- Provide advocacy and coordination to ensure that planning authorities are properly resourced to deliver quality outcomes.

This note has been prepared by Jim Birrell, MRTPI, HOPS Manager on behalf of Heads of Planning Scotland.