

The catalyst for the creation of POS was the merger of the three local authority associations into the new LGA. So, the three planning officer societies took the decision to mirror the change, to reflect the seamless nature of planning across authorities and ensure that planning can speak with one voice. From the outset a key requirement was to support the new LGA with professional and technical advice, to assist in policy formulation and to offer draft recommendations in response to consultations from Whitehall. The welter of guidance, regulation and legislation that has emerged from Eland House has made this a very busy decade for Society. Part of the POS response has been to form POS Enterprises which now provides much of this service and more, very effectively on a consultancy basis. However, I believe it is vital to retain and if possible step up the involvement of more chief planners and their middle managers in the work of Society in advising the LGA. Not only does this give POS greater strength in depth but exposure to the national 'scene' is a first class training ground for the next generation of chief planners.

And it is countering the pressures of the day job where POS continues to achieve another role, for it is a society, not a professional institute or a single issue pressure group. POS is about the people who operate planning in local government as much as it is about the duties they perform. Being a chief planner can sometimes be a lonely job. Pressures can be increased when re-structuring takes that job down the tiers where colleagues may have all the responsibility of delivery without the clout. This is where Society continues to play a unique and vital role offering comradeship and support. Solutions to problems are often common across the country and a problem shared is a problem halved. Planning is the beating heart of council activity, articulating the community strategy and helping turn vision and aspirations of local people into reality. All the more important then that we work towards a stronger Society, leading and supporting colleagues in this vital work.