Resourcing & Culture for Design Quality

25/11/2020

- **Good people can work around an imperfect planning system** but even a perfect planning system can't work around a shortage of good people.

- **Where people are placed is key – bring in a mix of skills and enable those with design skills to have a 'core focus' but the freedom to work across disciplines and departments**, allowing staff to talk about improvement and collaborate. Staff need to be rewarded for using their design skills (rather than absorbed into management) and hold a design right across the development process.

- **Leadership support is really crucial in building design excellence** – be sure of what you are trying to achieve in terms of design quality – where are the 'red lines'? Ensure that staff know what the design quality vision is and are empowered to hold onto it - visit and review schemes to really understand what quality looks like and how good design works.

- **There should be a presumption towards in-sourcing and building lasting staff capacity, this is more effective long term than outsourcing** – while a good culture for design quality can be built up, it can quickly dissipate if the skills are not embedded inside an organisation. Where they are used, outside resources have to reflect the character of the organisation.

- **New starters can use the virtual working environment to create a new culture – digital can be a leveller, although there are drawbacks to remote working and we need the 'best of both worlds'**. Look for triggers to improvement which can have a snowball effect, ensuring that change 'sticks'. Positive change can be amplified to reach out further, and small things can add up to something bigger! However choose your priorities and accept that sometimes change takes time.

- **The time to shape design is at the beginning.** Well-designed procurement can also be a powerful tool and open the door to design quality in schemes.

- **Consider tools such as the Danish design ladder**, embedding design not just in aesthetics but in process, strategy, systemic change and ultimately culture, helping make it resilient for the future.

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Links from the session

Public practice notes on design culture: https://www.publicpractice.org.uk/resources/fostering-design-culture

Danish design ladder https://medium.com/design-for-business/are-you-getting-the-most-out-of-design-f2f47caf2339

Speakers: **Attendees:** 53

Finn Williams, Public Practice

Clarissa Yee, LB Redbridge & Public Practice Associate

Tom Sykes, TfL

Neil Murphy, TOWN.

Peter Maxwell, LLDC

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