

# South East England Regional Assembly Economy Advisory Group

5 October 2005

**Present:**

Alistair Robson	East Sussex County Council - CHAIR
Jane Fletcher	South East Forum for Sustainability
Roger Kidd	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Roger Lawes	Hampshire County Council
Ross McNally	South East Chambers of Commerce
Sunethra Mendis	GOSE
Philip Craig	South East England Regional Assembly
Nikki Nicholson	South East England Regional Assembly
Nick Woolfenden	South East England Regional Assembly
Barry Deller	ACTVAR
Jay Hunt	SEEDA
Graham Tuck	Eastleigh BC
Tim Martin	Kent CC
Sue Cooper	West Sussex CC
Catherine Rose	South East England Regional Assembly (part)
Giuseppe Tripodi	South East England Regional Assembly (part)
Sandrine Mathard	South East England Regional Assembly (part)

## 1. Introduction and Apologies

**Apologies for absence:**

Mike Dunford	Sussex University
Brenda Pollack	SEFS
Eileen Armstrong	SEEDA
John Shapley	Buckinghamshire County Council

## 2. Notes of the last meeting

The group agreed to amend the notes of the last meeting to reflect the fact that it was Ray Bowers' last meeting, as he retired in August. The group wishes him well and thanks him for his contribution and hard work.

The notes were then approved without any further amendment.

## 3. Regional Monitoring Report

A covering note and a draft version of the economy chapter of the 2005 Regional Monitoring Report were circulated to the group prior to this meeting. Nikki clarified that the role of this report is to monitor RPG9 and the Integrated Regional Framework and invited members of the group to contribute to the debate on current indicators.

In the following debate some members of the group raised concerns on the robustness of employment rate data, due to the small samples used in the survey (LFS). The group felt that rather than producing commentaries for each indicator, it would be more useful to group the indicators and then set out a joint commentary for the whole chapter.

⇒ Members of the group to e mail comments on specific indicators by 20 October

A distinct set of indicators is being finalised to monitor the emerging South East Plan policies.

⇒ Assembly Secretariat to circulate final list of South East Plan Indicators when this is available.

#### **4a. South East Plan – Regeneration Priorities update on progress**

A paper setting out the proposed approach to Regeneration Priorities (Policy CC9) was circulated to the group prior to the meeting. Nick Woolfenden introduced the paper and highlighted that for the purpose of this study the Index of Multiple Deprivation as well as a range of other indicators had been considered in relation to the sub-regional frameworks.

The paper sets out how the South East Plan could identify and target priority areas for regeneration in policy CC9. The content of the paper had been discussed with SEEDA. The paper has been circulated to the sub-regional groups, and there would be the opportunity for them to feedback and discuss at the meeting on 13 October. It was highlighted that this policy will have a significant impact on Policy RE1, which will also need to be reviewed; the next step in this process would be to identify the implication of this policy on Policy RE1.

⇒ Members of the group to e mail comments on the paper by 20 October

In the following discussion several issues were raised, among which:

- How did it contribute to or complement the existing policy framework?
- How did it address the need for economic levers?
- How it fitted with AIFs and LSPs?
- How could local communities be involved to ensure sustainable 'bottom-up' solutions?

Overall, the group generally felt that CC9 needs to be bolder, although this would no doubt be the subject of further debate.

#### **4b. Sub-regional advice – update on work to date**

Nikki outlined the requirements on the sub-regions to provide, in the advice to the Assembly in November:

- The broad scale and nature of employment change – figures for the next 10 years and broad direction after that;
- Broad locations for new employment generating development; and
- Policies on strategic criteria for the provision of employment land and floorspace.

### Sub-regional progress

- Gatwick - Sue Cooper summarised that the sub-regional group were currently discussing whether to commission consultants to look at forecasts, different scenarios based on different growth levels, and the relationships between supply and demand.
- South Hampshire - Roger Lawes explained that DTZ have been commissioned to look at the demand side - scenario forecasts of employment around the proposed South East Plan strategy. Work was being undertaken in house to look at the supply side, including at proposed SDAs.
- Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley - Cath Rose reported Jon Shapley's feedback. The sub-region does not consider that there is a need to allocate more employment land. Further work is being undertaken on how the economy may change over the life of the plan, and future demand for labour.
- Kent Thames Gateway and East Kent and Ashford - Tim Martin reported that the sub-regions had been busy working on district allocations; however a broadbrush employment analysis had been undertaken.
- Sussex Coast - Alistair Robson said that the sub-region has also been focusing on housing numbers. They are not intending to provide strategic allocations but are discussing guidance on broad locations. They have not yet done any technical work on employment forecasts.
- London Fringe - Nick explained that the sub-region were sceptical about the use of employment forecasts, and were unlikely to do further work on this. The sub-regions approach to broad locations and strategic criteria is much the same as the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley.
- Central Oxfordshire - Nikki reported that the sub-region were looking at employment change qualitatively; had already set broad locations, and were not focusing on providing sub-regional criteria.
- Isle of Wight - Nikki explained that similar information had been requested from the Special Policy Area, and officers were following that up with them.
- Milton Keynes and Aylesbury Vale - The sub-region were not undertaking further work over and above that in the existing MKSM strategy.

⇒ Assembly to feedback EAG's review of progress to sub-regional lead officer meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> October

## **5. Options for creating a skills observatory for the South East**

Jay Hunt gave a short presentation about the options being considered, the Assembly's response to date and the possible ways forward. Key points included:

- The SO would be less resource intensive than Skills Insight
- The SEE-IN website would be used to 'host' the observatory
- It was hoped that the SO would also be able to focus on provision of 'real time' information.

- SEEDA would welcome a dialogue on the Assembly's specific LMI requirements.

Discussions following the presentation included:

- the need to avoid any Skills Observatory becoming simply another Skills Insight;
- differing needs amongst partners;
- constraints of existing data;
- the need for local data; and
- the need for dialogue with businesses.

## **6. RES review – discussion of key issues emerging from RES events**

(This item was taken before Item 5.)

Nikki summarised the group's work to date in producing the revised RES review paper, that had been passed to SEEDA.

Cath summarised the general feedback from Assembly officers on the RES events that had been attended to date:

- The key focus from SEEDA had been on quality of life and 'social cohesion' issues, skills, and increasing productivity, and smart growth.
- Presentations had generally been fairly unprovocative, and debates had often been on wider issues than the RES itself.
- Officers felt that there was still a need to clearly identify what RES can deliver and should influence, and to set clear goals (targets) and specific outcomes or indicators for it.

Ross McNally explained that he had written, on behalf of South East Chambers, to Pam Alexander requesting that SEEDA discuss directly with the Chamber network a number of broad themes. Other points raised included agreement that engaging businesses was difficult and that new ways of consulting industry should be explored and frustration that more detailed issues had not been discussed.

Jay Hunt expressed that the RES was a strategy for the region, and the best way people could respond to the forthcoming consultation draft was to provide targeted, rather than generic, responses. Nikki explained that the group would have a chance to consider the Assembly's draft response before it went before the Executive Committee early next year.

## **7 – AOB**

None

## **8 – Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed at 6 December at 10.00am. It was agreed that the next meeting should be held between 2 and 13 February 2006 - Nikki would canvass for specific dates.