

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
STRATEGY ADVISORY GROUP
27 June 2005**

Note of Meeting

Present:

Mike Gwilliam	South East England Regional Assembly (Chairman)
Martin Tugwell	South East England Regional Assembly
Ray Bowers	South East England Regional Assembly
Lindsay Gardner	South East England Regional Assembly
Alistair Robson	East Sussex County Council (Chair EAG)
Catherine Johnstone	RAISE
Chris Cousins	Oxfordshire County Council
Colin Byrne	GOSE
Edward Dawson	RAISE
Chris Swanwick	Wycombe District Council (POS)
Chris Corrigan	SEFS
Leigh Herington	Kent County Council (Chair HAG)
Paul Hudson	SEEDA
Stuart Hylton	Joint Strategic Planning Unit
Tony Curtis	Basingstoke and Dean (POS) (Chair Cross-Cutting)
Tony Stevens	Horsham District Council (POS)
Trevor Cherrett	Action in rural Sussex (Chair RAG)
Trevor Gasson	Maidstone Borough Council

1. Apologies

Alison Quant	Hampshire County Council
David Hackforth	Milton Keynes Council
Douglas Horner	CBI
Howard Davidson	Environment Agency (Chair NRCCAG)
Huw Jones	Buckinghamshire County Council
John Kilford	West Sussex County Council (Chair SEERAWP)
Mike Gill	GOSE
Peter Mann	Oxfordshire County Council (Chair TAG)
Steve Thwaites	Waverley Borough Council (POS)

2. Notes of Meeting on 17 May 2005 /Matters Arising

The notes were agreed. Mike Gwilliam made some additional comments to update advisory group members:

- a) The Regional Housing Strategy is still scheduled for publication by the end of June, with a formal launch planned for 21 July 2005.
- b) The South East Plan: Timetable - The South East Plan timetable remains as scheduled. The Regional Planning Committee agreed to submit part one of the Plan to Government after the Plenary in the interim until

formally submitting in March 2006. It is hoped this will reassure Ministers that the Assembly is fully committed to its present proposed timetable for delivery.

The Assembly is still awaiting a response from Ministers to its request to extend the timetable. A response is not likely until mid July at the earliest.

It was noted that the timetable as planned cannot be accelerated, and that the indicative timetable proposed in PPSI I is unrealistic if the requirements on public engagement are to be achieved.

The submitted document will include the regional policies and overall strategy less the sub-regional policies and the district housing distribution. The monitoring, implementation plan and full sustainability appraisal will be submitted at the same time as the full document in March 2006.

- c) The South East Plan: Implementation and Prioritisation – Martin Tugwell provided an update on the work on prioritisation. The Regional Transport Co-ordination Group has considered prioritisation work undertaken on the transport strategy. The Board is working towards agreeing a list of regional priorities at its meeting in October 2005. The need to identify a prioritised list of interventions will encourage consideration not only of more conventional forms of transport intervention but also look at how objectives can be achieved through alternative, and potentially more cost effective, mechanisms.

Further work is underway to look at how the methodology can be applied to other policy areas and whether a consistent approach to prioritising schemes can be developed. He suggested that the Cross-Cutting Group and StAG should be used as a sounding board for this important work. This was agreed.

Action: Martin Tugwell to bring a report on the prioritisation methodology to the next meeting of the Group.

3. South East Plan

a) Feedback following Regional Planning Committee

2 workshops and Regional Planning Committees have been held.

The first Planning Committee held on 13 June considered the consultation responses, forecasting, research/evidence base, the proposed levels of growth and the regional policies. They agreed to recommend an overall level of growth of 28,900 dwellings per annum for consideration at the Assembly Plenary on 13 July. Planning Committee members did not want to phase the growth, as proposed by Assembly Officers. However it was accepted that the Assembly's commitment to try and address the backlog in housing during the

first ten years of the Plan would require a higher level of growth. Almost all of the regional policies were agreed.

The additional Planning Committee meeting on 23 June considered sub-regional issues and any outstanding work from the 13 June Committee. Two changes to sub-regional boundaries were agreed. These were to move the boundary to the south of the Western Corridor at Basingstoke as proposed in light of the consultation responses and to remove Farnham from the Western Corridor. A revised distribution of the 28,900 growth level was tabled and approved for consideration at the Assembly Plenary on 13 July. A copy of this distribution was circulated to all StAG members at the meeting.

Work deferred until the December 2005 committee cycle for further consideration included:

- Proposals for four additional hubs – Tunbridge Wells/Tonbridge, Canterbury, High Wycombe and Farnborough/Aldershot/Camberley;
- Proposed spatial policy designations;
- The outstanding sub-regional work.

As a result of removing the spatial policy designations from the regional strategy, the sustainability appraisal will draw out serious weakness in the document in light of the changes made. This will be highlighted for members to consider in their discussions on the South East Plan at the Plenary.

b) Issues for Plenary

Three issues were deferred for consideration at the Assembly Plenary. These were:

- To propose wording on how the levels of growth can be 'front loaded';
- To propose a statement on economic growth assumptions for inclusion in the plan;
- To prepare a statement on the preferred strategy outlining its urban emphasis and a commitment to addressing problems and development needs in areas outside urban settlements.

After a lengthy discussion the group decided that they would like to make the following points to the Assembly Plenary:

1. Whilst recognising there is the need to have further discussion on the spatial designations proposed, the weakening of the strategy in light of the lack of regional spatial policy designations is of concern.
2. A phased approach to development was supported and the need to clarify the position on the proposed level of growth and the rate of development is required. Phasing should draw attention to the need for infrastructure to deliver the proposed development.
3. Concerns about the lack of economic growth assumptions in the plans. Whilst it was acknowledged this is going to be addressed for the Plenary, the negative impact on leaving out such a fundamental

economic assumption on the coherence between the Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy was stressed.

4. Clarity on the overall strategy is required, in particular the urban and urban renaissance emphasis of the strategy over the 20-year period and the spatial implications of this.

Action: Chairman to report StAG views to Assembly Plenary.

4. Sub-Regional Studies

Work is continuing. For December, all sub-regions will provide a target for affordable housing, reflecting local circumstances. Economic development assumptions will also be required, set within the regional strategy context.

Concerns from sub-regions were relayed about the proposed policy designations and the lack of discussion at the sub-regional level. With the deferral of this issue by members until December, this will be taken up with the sub-regions and also discussed with StAG over the Autumn.

Action: Chairman to arrange discussions of policy designations at next meeting of StAG

Further concerns were expressed over the proposed sub-regional housing distribution figures tabled at the 23 June Regional Planning Committee and recommended to the Plenary on 13 July. The revised figures in sub-regions such as the Western Corridor actually show reductions on present allocations, which the Group considered unrealistic.

The Group was reminded that the proposed distribution had been put forward by the South East County Leaders and that it had been discussed and endorsed by members of the Regional Planning Committee. The Plenary session would provide the opportunity for all stakeholders to express their opinion on the proposal.

Concern was also expressed that some Districts and Unitaries had not had the opportunity to discuss the proposed regional/sub-regional housing distribution proposed by the Counties and approved by the Regional Planning Committee and to assess its impact on sub-regional proposals. The Chairman suggested they should pursue these concerns with the sub-regional leads.

Action: District and Unitary members of StAG

5. Update on Housing Distribution Task Group

The Regional Planning Committee established this task group, with a remit to undertake preliminary work on the Housing Distribution so that any future discussions at committee will be taken in the light of their conclusions and recommendations. The group comprises representatives from local authorities and Assembly stakeholders and is chaired by Chris Kenneford from Buckinghamshire County Council. Assembly staff provide secretariat support, but do not take a leading role in the work.

The group has met twice with the next meeting scheduled for 19 July 2005. The aim of the next meeting will be to discuss establishing a common approach to consultation on sub-regional housing distribution. DTZ, the consultants who have been commissioned by the Assembly to assist on the housing distribution work are undertaking an audit of the consultation and technical work to date to inform discussions at the meeting. The consultation will be led locally, and not by the Assembly. The Assembly has made a financial contribution to assist in the cost of consultation, but will not provide further funding. Assembly staff will not attend all the meetings, as this is a local consultation.

Action: Chris Kenneford and Task Group to be advised

6. Any other Business

Mike Gwilliam advised this was Trevor Cherrett's and Ray Bowers' last StAG meeting. Trevor is moving on to take up the post of Head of Planning and Transport at the Commission for Rural Communities. Ray is retiring and will be leaving the Assembly in August.

Mike wanted to take the opportunity to thank Trevor for his input and time, and to publicly thank Ray for all this time and hard work at the Assembly over the past four years. The group echoed this.

7. Date of next meeting

- 11 October 2005: 10.15 – 13.00. Lunch will be provided.