

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Date: 6 March 2001

Subject: **Regional Planning: Monitoring and Review Arrangements**

Report of: Director of Planning and Transport

**Recommendation:**

That the Committee agree to the provisional timetable for the review of the Regional Guidance themes and the monitoring and working arrangements outlined in this report.

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**1 Background**

- 1.1 Now that the revised Regional Planning 'Guidance for the South East is almost at hand and the Assembly formally takes on the Regional Planning and Transport Role on the April 1, it would be appropriate to review future working arrangements.

**2 Review Requirements**

- 2.1 The new Planning Guidance requires early reviews to be undertaken by the Assembly of a number of issues. They are set out briefly below with an indication of the likely timetable for each component. There is a need to defer a full strategy review until the medium term to allow time to consolidate present arrangements and for effective monitoring of key issues such as housing.
- Transport (including Port Strategy) – the review of this component of the Regional Strategy is already underway with the consultation draft scheduled for publication winter 2001/2002.
  - Minerals – this review is affected by the national review of Mineral Planning Guidance which has repeatedly been delayed. Nevertheless the South East Regional Aggregates Working Party has agreed to provide the technical basis for much of the review and is undertaking preliminary studies. The Consultation draft for the review is therefore scheduled to be published Summer/Autumn 2002.

- Waste – this will be an important and sensitive component to the review, and will need to be informed by advice of the South East Region Technical Advisory Body on waste, which has agreed to undertake the technical work that can lead to a consultation draft to the same timetable as the minerals review.
- Tourism – in the light of current work on regional tourism cultural strategies this should be a less onerous review element and it is therefore hoped to produce a consultation statement that can be published at the turn of 2001/2002.
- Retail strategy – again it is not believed that this is a topic which requires a fundamental reappraisal of policy and accordingly a similar timescale to the Tourism Strategy is suggested.
- Renewable energy – this is a new topic for Regional Planning Guidance and the timetable for the review should therefore be the subject of further discussion.
- Thames Gateway – it is a specific requirement of the Regional Planning Guidance that the present Planning Guidance on Thames Gateway area (RPG 9A) should be the subject of an early review. Preliminary discussions indicated, however, that a fundamental review of the guidance for the Thames Gateway area is not required. On this basis it is hoped that a supplementary guidance statement could be produced by Summer 2002, with relatively modest resource commitments. The latter is important, as the review will require active co-ordination between the three Regional Planning Bodies covering the Thames Gateway area, and none of those Bodies has made specific resource provision for the review process.
- Monitoring Systems – it is required in the Regional Planning Guidance that new and improved monitoring systems are established by the Assembly to deal with the Regional Planning process. These need to include appropriate monitoring arrangements for the Sustainable Development Framework which the Assembly recently adopted. Arrangements to create such new systems are already underway and are commented on further later in this report.

### **3 Working Arrangements**

- 3.1 Technical working arrangements to support the review and monitoring process are now being established. These comprise three interlinked elements, all of which will be essential for an effective process. The first is the recruitment of a small team of Assembly staff to provide continuity and in-house expertise. This is now in hand and we hope to make appointments over the next few weeks. Secondly, a limited number of advisory working groups are being established following the model already used for the Transport Advisory Group. Every Local Authority in the region has been

consulted on these groups and has been given the opportunity to comment and indicate whether they wish to nominate staff to be members of these groups. We are also inviting other regional bodies such as SEEDA and the Environment Agency to play a very full part in the working group arrangements. It is envisaged that the working groups will be operational by May this year.

- 3.2 Although the support provided by the working groups and their technical members will be vital and invaluable, it is unlikely that the people involved, who all have extensive commitments elsewhere, will be able to devote the necessary concentrated time and specialist knowledge for some aspects of the review and monitoring process. This why the third element of the working structures, the employment of specialist consultants will also be essential. The Assembly has made budget provision for consultants and it will be essential to ensure that that resource is made available and is used as creatively as possible if the new review process is to be satisfactorily progressed. Joint studies, drawing in resources from other regional bodies, business and perhaps academic institutions, will therefore be pursued wherever possible.

#### **4 Monitoring**

- 4.1 Monitoring is given much greater emphasis in the new Planning Guidance, especially in view of the Government's adoption of Plan, Monitor, and Manage in place of *Predict and Provide*. In order to bring these improved monitoring arrangements into being, a specific Monitoring Task Group will be established to set the parameters of that process. In addition a new database needs to be created, which relates to the Assembly's boundaries rather than SERPLAN's and which focuses more sharply on the key political and strategic issues than SERPLAN did. Much of the SERPLAN database is therefore inappropriate for this task. An initial scoping exercise to design a new database is underway, and in addition liaison is taking place with GOSE and SEEDA to ensure that existing data sources are used wherever possible and duplication avoided. This principle will be followed in discussions with other sources of regional data such as the Environment Agency. Nevertheless, creating an adequate database which can be readily accessed and presented in an attractive form, using GIS and other appropriate systems, has significant resource implications.
- 4.2 In order to emphasise the significance of the monitoring process it is planned to produce a concise Annual Monitoring Report, focussing on the key strategic political issues.

#### **5 Implementation**

- 5.1 The new Guidance attaches greater importance to the role of the Assembly in encouraging through positive means, the implementation of Regional Guidance. Policies such as Urban Renaissance, the emphasis on recycling and the reuse of existing land and buildings, and the need for much higher proportions of affordable housing, all require proactive efforts if Guidance

targets and aspirations are to be met. Seminars, workshops and other events held jointly with appropriate bodies are therefore envisaged to help Local Authorities to deliver regional targets as well as identify potential problems and pitfalls.

## **6 Other Studies**

6.1 As well as the required regional guidance review it is important that progress is with a number of major regional growth studies and a series of sub-regional studies identified in Regional Planning Guidance. The largest regional growth area is Thames Gateway and reference has already been made to discussions about future review arrangements. The other two principle potential regional growth areas are Milton Keynes and Ashford. In both cases reports have already been brought this to the Planning Committee indicating that the process of commissioning consultants to undertake these studies is now in hand.

6.2 In addition, sub-region growth studies are required for the areas listed below. In each case the primary responsibility for the preparation falls with the appropriate local authorities. The Regional Assembly does, however, have an important role in ensuring that they are carried out in a consistent manner and to a timetable that meets regional requirements. We are therefore in the process of making contact with the appropriate local authorities and asking them to indicate their plans:-

- South Hampshire, Southampton and Portsmouth
- Isle of Wight
- Sussex Coast Towns
- East Kent
- Western Policy Area – Thames Valley
- Western Policy Area – Blackwater Valley
- Western Policy Area – Crawley/Gatwick/M23 Area

## **8 Member Arrangements**

8.1 Specific workshops will be held for members at key stages in the review process, and to discuss the conclusions of the Planning Committee process. On the most significant occasions it may be appropriate for these events to be organised for the whole Assembly.

**Mike Gwilliam**  
**Director of Planning and Transport**

28 February 2001