

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

Date: 21 March 2007

Subject: **Annual Monitoring Report**

Report of: Planning Strategy Director

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Committee approve, subject to any further amendments, the annual Regional Monitoring Report 2006 which the Assembly is required to submit to Government Office South East by end March 2007.

Purpose of Report:

To inform the Committee of the key findings of the 2006 Regional Monitoring Report (RMR2006). The draft executive summary is attached as Annex 1 and the full draft report is attached as Annex 2. A copy of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Annual Monitoring Report is also enclosed for information.

Key Issues:

The report looks at the progress of 99 indicators to monitor implementation of policies in RPG9 and the objectives of the IRF. Overall, in terms of the indicators the region is making clear progress. The region is doing particularly well in relation to the housing and quality of life indicators. The biggest difficulties in terms of insufficient or no comparable data can be found in the indicators used in the economy chapter. The highest proportion of indicators showing clear deterioration is in the transport chapter. In terms of the progress in delivery RPG9 policies the region is making progress but close attention to the performance of a number of the policies is required.

For the first year completions of commercial and leisure development joined housing completions in exceeding the national and regional target of 60% of developments on previously developed land. This situation will require continued monitoring as future supply may be compromised unless new sources can be found.

It is important to pay attention to the areas where the monitoring regime suggests that things are getting worse. The main areas for concern include:

- 1. Climate Change** - the impacts of climate change could include increased flood risk, changes in the frequency and severity of droughts (in a region where pressure on water resources is already high) and increase in air pollution. These policies are currently assessed as amber (needing close attention in future monitoring). Unless appropriate adaptation / mitigation measures are delivered, this could change to red (an under-performance against targets and objectives).
- 2. Socio-Economic Disparities** - some of the more deprived urban areas on the south coast have seen significant completions in employment opportunities. However, the percentage of people from the most deprived areas claiming unemployment benefit has increased above last year's figure and is approximately four times higher than the regional average. The need to address socio-economic disparities remains a priority in RPG9 as well as in the draft South East Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy. Policy RE7 on Priority Areas for Economic Regeneration is currently assessed as amber. There is a need to assess if the current policy initiatives are delivering the desired outcomes or if further actions are required.
- 3. Affordable Housing** - the ratio of average income to average house prices shows the difficulties with affordability in this region. There is a need to improve the way in which completions of affordable housing is monitored. The data that is available shows a substantial increase in rates of delivery in grant-funded affordable provision in the last four years, although the total is still well below that required to meet identified needs. This is reflected in the assessment of policy H4 on affordable housing as amber. The Regional Housing Board is looking at spending priorities and actions required to address this issue as part of the update of the Regional Housing Strategy.
- 4. Proportion of Journeys by Car** - while transport indicators show a reduction in the overall amount of travel on the regions' major roads trends towards a higher proportion of journeys by car are persistent and problematic. Policy T9 on public transport is currently assessed as red showing an under-performance against targets / objectives. The issue requires far-ranging and large-scale solutions that will require Government support and investment. The region is working through the Regional Transport Board to ensure that the package of measures on mobility management set out in the South East Plan is implemented.
- 5. Flooding** - there were 310,000 properties at risk from flooding in 2006 and policy INF1 on the risk of flooding is currently assessed as amber. Further work is required to improve data collection. In accordance with PPS25 (on flood risk) Flood Risk Assessments are informing Local Development Frameworks and the consideration of flood risk for new development which should result in a positive trend.

- 6. Waste Exported from London** - London continues to export large amounts of waste to South East England and other regions for disposal. Robust data is lacking. The London Plan has targets to improve its self-sufficiency in waste management. The region's landfills are filling up and have only 15 years' capacity. Progress is needed in providing alternative management capacity, minimising generation and reducing impacts from London.

1. Background

- 1.1 The RMR monitors current RPG9 (as amended by the adopted partial reviews¹) and the Integrated Regional Framework (IRF). The RMR will continue to monitor the implementation of policies in RPG9 until the South East Plan is adopted in 2008.
- 1.2 Regulations require a monitoring report to be produced by the end of February each year. The Assembly has been given a month's extension for the 2006 report to allow for its production at the same time as the Examination in Public of the draft South East Plan.

2. Annual Monitoring Report

- 2.1 The approach used in the RMR2006 is based on looking at the progress of indicators compared to previous year's or latest data, and to use the key findings and commentary from the assessment of the indicators to monitor the progress of policies. The 2005 report saw the introduction of traffic lights to summarise progress and these have continued to be used this year.
- 2.2 A separate executive summary has been prepared in response to a CLG requirement. The full report has been simplified where possible. A summary table is included at the start of each chapter setting out all indicators, the latest data for each indicator, the progress of the indicator, the RPG9 policy, related IRF objectives and the target for the indicator or policy. The tables are followed by a discussion of the key policy implications drawn out of the chapter's key findings and commentary. The main bulk of the chapter then follows with a presentation of each indicator and a list of the highlights which the data is showing. Commentaries are included for each indicator or group of indicators. A key difference to the 2005 report is that only those indicators that show significant change or are National Core Output Indicators are presented to reduce repetition between RMRs. All indicators are, however, included in the summary tables at the start of the chapters.

¹ Adopted amendments to RPG comprise the Regional Transport Strategy (2004), Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (2004), Tourism and related Sport and Recreation (2004), and those in respect of Ashford (2004) and Milton Keynes South Midlands (2005) Growth Areas.

3. Key Findings and Conclusions

- 3.1 The headline implications listed at the end of each of the chapters are reproduced below for ease of reference:
- 3.2 Quality of Life in Town and Country
- 3.2.1 There is a need to continue to monitor land available for **development in urban areas**. The Assembly and local partners should specifically consider the land available in urban areas for housing relative to commercial and leisure development in the 2007 RMR. Action may be required to reallocate land to commercial and leisure uses in some parts of the region depending on the findings of this monitoring data.
- 3.2.2 The National Community Safety Plan 2006-2009 signals the beginning of a new way of working on **community safety**, with much closer collaboration between central Government and local partners in the setting of priorities and the development of new community policies and initiatives. The region must ensure that key agencies at all levels of government work with communities to tackle these issues.
- 3.2.3 In supplying data on **housing densities**, many areas continue to rely on a gross measure rather than net figures for site areas. It is important that local authorities address this inconsistency as a matter of some urgency, so that future monitoring information is based on net developable areas.
- 3.2.4 The Assembly, working with local authorities, needs to improve collection of data on **developments in town centres**.
- 3.2.5 Despite the positive trends in the **health** of the region's population, there is an ongoing need to ensure policy and delivery enables improvements. The draft South East Plan recognises the significance of good partnership working between local authorities and the health service, to ensure necessary services are provided and recommends that Health Impact Assessment should be used as a matter of course in decision making.
- 3.2.6 The region needs to improve the collection of data on **rural communities** and access to key services and regional and local partners need to implement the policies in the draft South East Plan to address intra-regional disparities across rural and urban areas.
- 3.3 Environment Strategy and the Countryside
- 3.3.1 The first stage of a project initiated by the South East England Biodiversity Forum has now been completed. This will improve data quality and produce **a robust baseline for measurement of habitat** change.
- 3.3.2 To sustain positive momentum on **air quality**, there needs to be continued focus on pollution prevention. Issues include ensuring levels of primary pollutants (e.g. NO₂, SO₂, CO₂) are reduced. The draft South East Plan sets out a policy to ensure that local authorities should seek this improvement.

3.4 The Regional Economy and Social Deprivation

- 3.4.1 In absolute terms, the economy of the region is still outperforming the national average. However, **maintaining this level of growth could be a challenge** as demonstrated by last year's lower growth rate in GVA per capita. It will require continued improvements in activity rates, a diversification of the economy ensuring productivity is maximised and the addressing of intra-regional disparities. The importance of aligning the Regional Economic Strategy and Regional Spatial Strategy through a joint implementation plan is critical to addressing those challenges.
- 3.4.2 The need to address **intra-regional socio-economic disparities** is an ongoing priority for the region and is reflected in the Policy CC9 in the draft South East Plan. Policies designed to ensure effective economic distribution often require a long lead-in time to determine their effectiveness. This situation will need to be monitored to ensure that positive outcomes, such as employment development completions in deprived areas, equate to employment for local communities.
- 3.4.3 The Regional Assembly, working with local authorities, needs to improve collection of data through the **commercial and leisure survey**.
- 3.4.4 The robustness of **tourism data** remains a concern. The Assembly is working with Tourism South East and SEEDA to enhance sub-regional and local tourism data sets in the region, which currently suffer from inconsistency and small sample sizes.

3.5 Housing

- 3.5.1 Despite more housing completions, there is a need to provide the right mix of housing in terms of **type, size and tenure**. There are significant challenges to be addressed if the region is to provide for planned and sustainable levels of housing growth in a way that targets housing needs. Local authorities need to consider these issues at the local level as part of their LDF processes.
- 3.5.2 The Regional Housing Board has been looking at issues of **affordable and unfit housing** and will be considering these through the current update of the Regional Housing Strategy and through considering its spending priorities for the period 2008/09 to 2010/11.
- 3.5.3 Work is underway to identify a more comprehensive and robust basis for **monitoring the provision of affordable housing** that includes non-grant funded houses and which links in with the Regional Assembly's monitoring of total housing provision.

- 3.6 Transport
 - 3.6.1 Transport is a huge issue for the region. Trends to a higher **proportion of journeys by car** are persistent and problematic.
 - 3.6.2 The issue requires far-ranging and large-scale solutions that will require Government support and investment. In the first instance there is a need to focus on the mobility management package of measures set out in the RTS.
 - 3.6.3 The region needs to continue to focus on education and other measures at sub-regional level to ensure the rate of **killed and seriously injured casualties** falls across the region.
 - 3.6.4 The Assembly needs to work with local authorities to develop an indicator to measure **parking provision for new developments**.
- 3.7 Supply and Development of Other Infrastructure - Water, Waste and Energy
 - 3.7.1 The Regional Assembly, working with local authorities, needs to **collect data on planning permissions by local authorities granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency** on grounds of flood defence.
 - 3.7.2 To sustain positive momentum on **water supply and quality** there needs to be a continued focus on water efficiency and water conservation through influencing behaviour and on pollution prevention. This includes diffuse pollution from agriculture and urban run-off as well as discharges of treated sewage into rivers. These need to be managed to stay within tightening standards and comply with European laws.
 - 3.7.3 The Assembly, working with waste planning authorities (or the Assembly and the South East Regional Technical Advisory Body for Waste (SERTAB)), needs to **improve collection of data on arisings and management of all waste but particularly commercial and industrial waste and construction and demolition waste**.
 - 3.7.4 **Reducing growth in waste, reducing waste arisings and increasing recycling and recovery of all waste must continue.** A large number of new waste management facilities will be required to deliver the draft South East targets for recycling and diversion from landfill. London must also meet this challenge to reduce reliance on the South East's landfills.
- 3.8 Minerals
 - 3.8.1 Research is being carried out to fill the current **gaps in data** in wharves and rail depots and silica sand producers and brickworks and to understand the reasons behind the decline in land-won sand and gravel reserves.
 - 3.8.2 **Apportionment of primary aggregates is being revised**, taking into account the extent of reserves, their constraints and other sustainability factors.

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