

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

Date: 26 September 2007

Subject: **Regional Sustainability Framework Consultation**

Report of: Director of Planning

Recommendation:

That the Committee:

1. Considers the consultation draft of the Regional Sustainability Framework (RSF) and suggests changes, where necessary, to be taken into account through the consultation process.
2. Notes that the Assembly, along with other regional partners, will be asked to endorse the final version of the RSF following the consultation.

Purpose of Report:

To inform the Committee of:

- The review process for the RSF, including steering and consultation arrangements

To enable the Committee to:

- Consider the consultation draft of the RSF and propose changes to the RSF, particularly taking into account the South East Plan and other regional planning implications.

Key Issues:

The RSF results from a requirement by government to review the current Integrated Regional Framework (IRF) in 2007. This is matched by a commitment, made by the regional partners, to start a review of IRF in 2006. The RSF is therefore based on the framework set out in the IRF and the Regional Sustainable Development Framework (RSDF - 2001). The RSF aims to raise the profile and simplify the IRF, thereby improving the understanding and buy-in to sustainable development within the region. To facilitate this, a new high level, technical steering group, the Sustainable Futures Group (SFG), has been established.

Key elements of the RSF include:

- A new regionally specific RSF vision.
- Two overarching regional goals for sustainable development.
- 24 objectives and associated targets and indicators to guide and measure progress.
- Four regional priorities for sustainable development.
- A Sustainability Appraisal guide to enable integration of objectives into policy development.

1. The Review of the Integrated Regional Framework

- 1.1 The current Integrated Regional Framework (IRF) establishes a shared vision and a set of objectives for integrated working and ultimately the sustainable development of the region. Although the Assembly leads on the preparation, monitoring and review of the IRF it is owned by a wide range of regional stakeholders. The evolution and application of the framework has been guided by the IRF working group which is made up of Regional representatives and chaired by the Assembly member Chris Corrigan.
- 1.2 As set out in the RSF progress report to the Executive Committee, the IRF working group commenced a review of the framework in September 2006. The aim of the review was to raise the profile of a more simplified document called the Regional Sustainability Framework (RSF) as well as updating and / or restructuring to take account of the 'key ingredients' set out in the relevant government guidance.
- 1.3 As detailed, part of the review process was to set up a stronger, higher level steering group to oversee the review and maximise engagement and buy in to the new framework. A new group, called the Sustainable Futures Group (SFG), has therefore been established. SFG is made up of regional representatives from GOSE, SEEDA and the Assembly as well as stakeholders including environmental and voluntary groups, the health and business sector and a local authority representative. The group is chaired by Ian Christie, an independent researcher, consultant and lecturer on sustainable development.

2. The Regional Sustainability Framework - Consultation Draft

- 2.1 The resulting RSF sets a common vision, two regional goals, four priorities and 24 objectives that will help guide sustainable development in the South East. It is intended that all regional strategies and policies should follow the RSF principles to ensure the actions of all South East organisations contribute to a consistent vision of our sustainable future. The RSF also contains a Sustainability Appraisal guide that aims to encourage regional and local organisations, businesses and community groups to review their own plans and strategies against the framework. This will enable the sustainable development objectives to be integrated into their respective actions.

Regular monitoring of RSF objectives enables progress towards sustainable development to be measured. For example the current IRF provides the sustainable development contextual indicators which are included within the Regional Monitoring Report.

2.2 The RSF vision for the South East is a strong, healthy and just region that respects the limits of the global environment. Achieving this will require the active involvement of all individuals to deliver a society where everyone, including the most deprived people, has an equal opportunity to benefit from and contribute to the region's sustainable prosperity. At the same time the impact of current high levels of resource use will be reduced and the quality of the natural environment will be maintained and enhanced for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations to come.

2.3 The RSF vision is broken down into two key regional goals for sustainable development:

- Achieving a strong, healthy and just society, supported by a world class sustainable economy.
- A region that lives within environmental limits.

These goals are divided into 24 objectives, each one further broken down into a number of targets, which can be measured to check progress.

2.4 Using the information contained within the RSF the SFG has identified four regional priorities:

- Achieving sustainable levels of resource use.
- Reducing the region's carbon footprint.
- Ensuring that the South East is prepared for the inevitable impacts of climate change.
- Ensuring that everyone, including the most deprived people, has an equal opportunity to benefit from and contribute to the region's sustainable prosperity.

2.5 Achieving progress against these priorities will urgently require the timely provision of the right kind of infrastructure within the South East. Delivery against these priorities, goals and objectives will also require regional and local bodies and individuals to work together to ensure RSF principles are reflected in their behaviour, plans, decisions and actions.

3. The RSF Consultation Process

3.1 The views of RPC will be considered alongside those from the wider stakeholder consultation. Members are encouraged to widen the scope of this consultation by disseminating the RSF through their respective groups and networks as appropriate.

Any resulting changes will be incorporated in the final RSF. The Assembly will be asked to endorse the RSF in March 2008 with publication following shortly afterwards.

- 3.2 Ahead of the formal consultation, all Members were given the opportunity to consider the RSF and the regional priorities at the last Plenary meeting on 18 July 2007. Resulting changes, including a more explicit mention of the role of the economy, have been incorporated in the consultation draft of the RSF.
- 3.3 The RSF consultation period runs from September 3 to November 26. The consultation is seeking to obtain the views of Regional Assembly Members, Local Authorities, Local Strategic Partnerships, regional partners and stakeholders and other interested groups. The consultation documents and the response questionnaire are available on the Assembly's website at www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/rsf or by contacting the Regional Assembly on 01483 501309. To support the consultation two workshops are also planned for the autumn. If you would like to attend a workshop, please contact the Regional Assembly on 01483 555200.

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