

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY SELECT COMMITTEE ON SEEDA's APPROACH TO LABOUR FORCE AND EMPLOYMENT

Submission from: **East Hampshire District Council**

Date: **September 2008**

1. Within the RES, does SEEDA adequately capture the range of key issues and challenges regarding labour force and employment in the region?

The Regional Economic Strategy provides a useful listing of the issues and actions needed to address the challenges.

2. How effective are the key strategic regional agencies with an interest in labour force and employment, such as SEEDA, Job Centre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council, in developing a joined up and coherent approach?

At the District level, it is not apparent how the key agencies have developed a joint approach, as we have not been party to the discussions, nor had sight of any agreements reached. As this is a key issue in the Council and East Hampshire Community Strategies, more local engagement would be welcome.

3. SEEDA's Corporate Plan gives considerable emphasis to higher level management and technical skills. Is this focus appropriate and what should it do to also ensure development of basic skills and employability?

The region's needs are not confined to higher level skills. In East Hampshire, we have over one fifth of the working age population with NVQ1 or lower qualifications. SEEDA should support the local delivery of national programmes such as Pathways to work and align its funding with local partnerships who are addressing this challenge. LSP/LAA are suitable local partnership routes.

4. Is the range of SEEDA's activities appropriate and suitably targeted to tackle labour force and employment issues? Where should the balance lie between strategic and local interventions?

Labour force and employment support is best delivered locally by public/private partnerships of appropriate agencies. SEEDA's role should be to provide a strategic framework for planning interventions.

5. Is SEEDA doing enough to encourage sustainable job creation in the region, particularly in under-performing areas? How and where should it focus resources on this issue to best effect?

SEEDA is working with local agencies to address under-performing areas, but there should be a far greater devolution of funding to the local level as happened with Area Investment Frameworks.

6. How effective is SEEDA in engaging with businesses to understand their skills needs and in promoting employers' responsibilities regarding skills development?

SEEDA needs to work closely with Business led partnerships (e.g. Hampshire Economic Partnership/East Hampshire Business Initiative) and Sector Skills Councils to help promote initiatives such as apprenticeship schemes, the Skills Pledge and Local Employer Partnerships (LEPs). This is particularly true in specific areas targeted for growth/investment – such as the Whitehill Bordon Opportunity.

7. What has been your experience of the Regional Skills for Productivity Alliance? What needs to be done to ensure its long-term effectiveness? What can SEEDA or other partners do to support the evolution of Local Skills for Productivity Alliances into revised roles as local Employment and Skills Boards?

We have had no experience of the RSfPA. We support sub regional and local partnerships having a key role in ESBs.

8. How effectively do SEEDA and other strategic regional organisations engage with the further and higher education sectors, voluntary and community sector, local partners and deliverers to tackle employment and labour issues in the region? What more needs to be done?

SEEDA has a good record of engaging with these sectors at the strategic level, but has only given limited support to partnerships set up in Hampshire to address these issues. SEEDA needs to engage both staff and funding resources through the Local Area Agreements. The Hampshire LAA focuses on skills and employability and would welcome more practical engagement by SEEDA. This needs to follow through in local strategic partnerships, for example to meet the outcomes set out in the East Hampshire Community Strategy.

9. How effectively do SEEDA and local authorities work together on labour force and employment issues? In the light of an increasing role for local authorities in this area, what more needs to be done to ensure effective joined-up working arrangements?

There is Hampshire-wide Panel for Employment, Learning and Skills on which SEEDA are represented by the Area Director. Locally the East Hampshire Community Partnership is seeking to build a more co-ordinated approach. There needs to be a sub-regional effort to create a better strategic alignment of 14-19 education, adult learning, capital investment (e.g. Building Schools for the Future) and economic/business demand.

SEEDA has not previously engaged with the Council on these issues.