

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

Submission from: **Hampshire County 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 County 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.

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 Hampshire, we have 180,000 people of working age 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. County Councils are well placed to lead in this area, through programmes such as Adult and Family Learning, Childrens' Centres, the 14-19 agenda etc.

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) and Sector Skills Councils to help promote initiatives such as apprenticeship schemes, the Skills Pledge and Local Employer Partnerships (LEPs).

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, but have worked closely with the Hampshire LSPA on a number of specific initiatives. We support their 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.

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?

We are developing a county-wide Panel for Employment, Learning and Skills on which SEEDA are represented by the Area Director. Internally, the Council is building a more co-ordinated approach under its Portfolio Holder for Skills, Economic Development and Human Resources. Externally, it is seeking 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 County Council on these issues, but has responded positively to our emerging proposals.