

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Date: 12 September 2008

Subject: **Regional Planning Committee - 23 July 2008**

Report of: Chairman of the Regional Planning Committee

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Committee notes the contents of this report.

Purpose of Report:

To update the Executive Committee on the meeting of the Regional Planning Committee held on 23 July 2008.

1. Election of Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Sub-Groups

- 1.1 I was pleased to be unanimously elected as Chairman of the committee. Cllr Jerry Patterson was elected as Vice-Chairman. All nominations to the various sub-groups are attached in Annex 1.

2. South East Plan Proposed Changes: Initial Response

- 2.1 Catriona Riddell, Director of Planning, outlined some initial reactions to the Government's Proposed Changes to the plan which was published the previous week and is subject to consultation until 24 October. A full response will be considered by the Committee in September prior to the Assembly meeting on the 17 October.
- 2.2 Some of the immediate headlines reported were:
- Although much of the Assembly's plan remains intact and some of the new proposed policies are to be welcomed, on initial reading of the changes, there are considerable concerns about implementing the plan at the local level.
 - The Government has apparently used untested evidence (both strategic and local) to arrive at the proposed housing numbers.
 - There appears to be inconsistencies in the way Strategic Development Areas (SDAs) are being treated, with two new SDAs proposed (Shoreham and Whitehill/Bordon) and one recommended by the Panel (Reading SDA) deleted.
 - The proposal that housing numbers should be treated as 'minimums' is likely to cause difficulties for local authorities in testing their allocations through the LDF process, particularly in terms of sustainability appraisal and in planning for infrastructure etc.
- 2.3 In the discussion following, Members expressed their concerns about how the housing numbers would be delivered in practice through the LDFs and the fact that there were so many inconsistencies in the way the Government seems to have increased certain district allocations. The proposal that the housing allocations should be treated as 'minimum annual averages' was of particular concern to Members.

3. Housing Issues

NHPAU Advice to the Minister on Regional Housing Supply Ranges for Testing

- 3.1 Howard Ewing (GOSE) gave the Committee background information on the role of the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit (NHPAU) which is to give Government advice on housing and housing affordability. The Government received its advice from NHPAU for the South East recently and the ranges were approximately 38- 49k per annum. This is to be tested through a review of the South East Plan.

- 3.2 Ministers have now written to all Assemblies about RSS reviews, the timescale of which should be determined on a region by region basis. A meeting between the Assembly Chairman, Cllr Paul Carter, and Caroline Flint MP is due to take place in October to agree a way forward for the South East.

Housing Provision: LDF Matters

- 3.3 This item was related to the previous discussion on the Proposed Changes and the concern that Government is treating housing numbers as minimum allocations. This, added to the well-rehearsed 'windfall' issue was increasingly being seen as the Government driving up the housing numbers through the back door. Assembly officers had been asked to provide supporting evidence at a LDF Examinations expressing concerns about the difficulty in the approach now being introduced by the Government.
- 3.4 The Committee agreed that a letter outlining these concerns be sent to the Minister, Caroline Flint.

4. Water Resources Management Plans

- 4.1 The Committee was given an overview of the Water Resource Management Plans (WRMPs) that are currently out for consultation. The plans for each water company set out the context for their investment in water resource management and water supply for the next 25 years, and will provide the longer term framework in which investments will be approved through the 5 year Asset Management Plan process.
- 4.2 Overall, officers felt that we could be content that the water companies are planning for the growth proposed in the South East Plan as they have used much of the same evidence base and the plan itself. However, in the light of the Proposed Changes there may be a need to re-visit this modelling, especially where new SDAs are proposed which may not have featured in previous modelling. The levels of growth proposed by NHPAU have not been modelled previously, and so as part of our testing of these levels in the First Review of the Plan the Assembly will need to liaise with the Environment Agency and the water companies.
- 4.3 Following discussion we agreed to the proposed response which was strengthened, particularly to highlight the importance of the Assembly's role in future discussions with water companies.

5. Consultation Response to Guidance on Port Masterplans

- 5.1 The Committee was asked to agree the Assembly's response to the consultation which welcomed the encouragement of ports to do their own masterplans, like Dover. In discussion we;
- Raised concerns about the relationship with the National Ports Policy Statement expected in 2009/10.

- Advocated the inclusion in the guidance of specific advice to incorporate an ecological footprint assessment in the masterplan.
- Felt that there should be stronger references to landside infrastructure given that this is intended to be part of the masterplan role.

5.2 The Committee agreed the response with amendments to emphasise the environmental issues and to obtain clarity on Government's aspirations for the masterplans.

Cllr Moira Gibson
Chairman of the Regional Planning Committee

1 September 2008

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Annex I - Membership of Sub-Groups:

LDD Conformity

Conservative: Cllr Martin Tett
Liberal Democrat: Mr Ian Beardsmore
Labour: Cllr James Swindlehurst
Economic Partner: Mr Tim Lockwood
Social and Environmental Partner: Rev Dr Derek Overfield

Major Planning Applications

Conservative: Cllr Tony Reid
Liberal Democrat: Cllr Jerry Patterson
Labour: Cllr James Swindlehurst
Economic Partner: Mr Ross McNally
Social and Environmental Partner: Rev Dr Derek Overfield (TBC)

Gypsies and Travellers

Conservative: Cllr David Munro
Liberal Democrat: Cllr Keith House
Labour: Cllr Tony Page
Economic Partner: Mr Alan Durrant
Social and Environmental Partner: Mr Warren Finney

South East Plan Steering Group

Conservative: TBA
Liberal Democrat: Cllr Ian Beardsmore
Labour: Cllr Tony Page
Economic Partner: Douglas Horner
Social and Environmental Partner: Mr Ian Hepburn

Inter-Regional Forum

Conservative: Cllr Miss Moira Gibson
Liberal Democrat: Cllr Ian Beardsmore
Labour: Cllr James Swindlehurst
Economic Partner: Mr Tim Lockwood
Social and Environmental Partner: Mr Robert Hamlin

Monitoring

Conservative: TBA
Liberal Democrat: Cllr Keith House
Labour: TBA
Economic Partner: TBA
Social and Environmental Partner: Mr Ian Hepburn