

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 11 APRIL 2008

Present: Keith Mitchell, CBE (Chairman)

Mary Ballin
Jeremy Birch
Louise Bloom
Paul Carter
Michael Chater
Ian Chisnall
Alison Cook
Myles Cullen
Peter Dean
Alan Durrant
Ian Fowler
Moirra Gibson
Patricia Harris
Ian Hepburn
Douglas Horner
Roger House
Gordon Keymer, CBE
Jeremy Kite
Keith Mann
David Neighbour
Tony Page
Pam Palmer
Jerry Patterson
Tony Reid
David Shakespeare, OBE
Karen Stalbow
Cec Tallack
Ian Ward
Paul Watkins

In Attendance: Paul Bevan, Chief Executive
Martin Tugwell, Director of Development
Catriona Riddell, Director of Planning
Heather Bolton, Communications Director
Nick Woolfenden, Head of Policy
Louise Wilby, Committee Administrator
David Payne, Planning Manager
Ameeta Rowland, Policy Assistant
Alistair Moses, PR Executive
Jo Shockley, Assembly Partner Support Manager
Howard Ewing, GOSE
Sheila Hopson, GOSE
Paul Lovejoy, SEEDA
Barbara Hammond, SEEDA
Oona Muirhead, SEEDA

1. Apologies for Absence, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Elizabeth Cartwright, Chris Corrigan, Roy Ilott, Nick Skellett and Matthew Tyler-Jones. The following substitutions were declared: Ian Hepburn for Chris Corrigan, Alan Durrant for Roy Ilott and Pam Palmer for Matthew Tyler-Jones. Paul Watkins substituted for Mary Ballin when she left the meeting.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 January 2008

- 2.1 The minutes, subject to the following amendments, were **agreed and signed** as a true record of the meeting.
- 2.2 Page 4, para 4.10
It was **agreed** that the penultimate sentence be amended to, “**Local government in** the South East appeared unique in putting forward this view.”
- 2.3 Page 7, para 5.6
It was **agreed** that the first sentence to be amended to read, “Douglas Horner sought clarification about the arrangements for devolved **rural** funding through local authorities.”
- 2.4 Page 7, para 5.6
It was **agreed** that the second sentence be amended to read, “Paul Lovejoy advised that it was mainly devolved through county-based rural partnerships but that this will **probably** change in **2009**.”
- 2.5 Page 9, para 6.19
It was **agreed** that the first sentence to be amended to, “Cllr Cec Tallack expressed concern about **the direction of the discussion**.”

3. Matters Arising

3a. Update on Eco-Towns – Report of the Director of Development

- 3a.1 The Director of Development confirmed that the consultation, published on 3 April 2008, will conclude on 30 June 2008. It sought views on the development of the concept, potential benefits, features, deliverability, innovative approaches and proposals for Eco-Towns.
- 3a.2 Three Eco-Towns are proposed for the region at Bordon-Whitehill (up to 5,500 homes), Weston-Otmoor at Cherwell, Oxfordshire (10,000–15,000 homes) and Ford in West Sussex (5,000 homes and 50 hectares of land for economic development). He noted that whilst the Eco-Town at Bordon-Whitehill was promoted by the district council and other partners, those at Weston-Otmoor and Ford were not. The final list of locations will be published at the end of 2008. A planning policy statement providing further guidance will be proposed for consultation in July 2008.

- 3a.3 He also highlighted a proposed Eco-Town in the East of England at Marston Vale, part of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area, which had potential regional impact.
- 3a.4 The Director suggested that the Regional Planning Committee (RPC) draft a response at its meeting on 21 May 2008 for consideration by the next meeting of the Executive Committee on 13 June 2008.
- 3a.5 He suggested that the Assembly's response focuses on the consistency of the proposal with the South East Plan. He advised that Eco-Towns were eligible to apply for the Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF) and that the Regional Transport Board (RTB) will consider regional priorities for the fund at its meeting on 16 May 2008.
- 3a.6 He noted that the Assembly will respond to any planning applications as statutory consultee. This will require a technical response through the RPC.
- 3a.7 Cllr David Shakespeare, OBE asked whether the planning policy statement would form a material consideration to how any appeal would be considered if the local planning authority refused an application.
- 3a.8 The Chairman confirmed that Henry Cleary had made it clear that local government would make that decision, but that subsequent decisions would be made by the Secretary of State through the appeal process.
- 3a.9 Cllr Michael Chater asked for a firm assurance that the proposal for Ford would not go ahead until there was substantial funding for infrastructure to reduce the congestion on the A27.
- 3a.10 Howard Ewing, whilst acknowledging that it was not appropriate for him to comment on individual schemes, advised that the consultation period will be the appropriate time to raise concerns. He indicated that in addition to the Eco-Town planning policy statement the Local Development Plan and Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) would also be part of the material consideration.
- 3a.11 The Planning Director noted that proposals will also have to comply with the Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) and sought assurance that proposals will not be in advance of the proposed changes to the South East Plan. Howard Ewing indicated that it was not the intention to do so.
- 3a.12 Ian Hepburn expressed concern that Eco-Towns, whilst an encouraging concept, were unlikely to be delivered without damaging ecology. The Director of Development advised that the Government's minimum requirement was not just to mitigate environmental impact but to improve landscaping and biodiversity. He noted that this was a high standard and that the sustainability appraisal will measure success against these requirements.
- 3a.13 Howard Ewing reported that the Eco-Towns Challenge Panel had recently been announced. Membership included the Town and County Planning Association and the Chief Executive of the Waste and Resource Action Programme. Responding to a question about the independence of the panel, Howard Ewing

reported that its membership also included the Campaign for Better Transport, Green Alliance and Wayne Hemingway, the designer.

The Committee **noted**:

- a) The process through which government is seeking proposals for development of Eco-Towns and the potential for a number of these to be in the South East.
- b) The delay to the announcement of the shortlist of potential Eco-Towns.
- c) The concerns raised by Cllr Keith Mitchell in a letter to Caroline Flint MP (see Annex I) about the way in which proposals will be dealt with through the spatial planning system.

4. **GOSE Report**

- a) Sub-National Review
- 4.1 Howard Ewing highlighted the consultation events to be held on 12 and 13 May 2008.
- b) Local Area Agreements (LAAs)
- 4.2 He reported that good progress was being made and that the process was proving to be a positive one. It was intended that the agreements will be signed by the June deadlines.
- c) Regional Minister
- 4.3 Howard Ewing reported that two visits to the region were planned. He noted that Matthew Taylor, MP, who had been asked to provide a report on rural housing, will be visiting the region this month with Jonathan Shaw and will meet with Cllr Elizabeth Cartwright.
- 4.4 The Minister will also attend the South East County Leaders' Away Day in Southampton in May and the Partnership Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) Skills Summit in July.
- 4.5 He had recently attended a SEEDA Board meeting and confirmed that his priorities continued to be housing and skills.
- 4.6 Ian Chisnall asked how well the third sector had been engaged in LAAs. Howard Ewing stated that overall engagement had been good.
- 4.7 Peter Dean requested a quarterly forward plan of the Minister's activities, together with objectives. Howard Ewing **agreed** to pursue this.
- 4.8 Cllr Michael Chater noted CLG's publication of 'Unlocking the Talent of Our Communities' and asked that Town and Parish Councils be better represented in the document. This was **noted**.

The Chairman thanked Howard Ewing for his report.

5. SEEDA Report

a) Agency Activity Report, 31 January 2008

- 5.1 Paul Lovejoy introduced the report and drew the Committee's attention to the work being done on Corporate Social Responsibility.
- 5.2 He referred to the American company, Palmer Johnson's recent announcement to relocate two manufacturing facilities for super yachts to Hythe Marine Park and Woolston Riverside with the creation of 800 jobs over five years. He believed the process was a good example of local authorities and regional partners working together to attract investment in keeping with local priorities and needs.
- 5.3 Paul Lovejoy reported on the ongoing process, managed by the Office for the Commissioner for Public Appointments, for the recruitment of SEEDA's new Chairman. He expected the appointment to be announced in July 2008. In addition four members of the Board, two from the business sector and two from local authorities, were coming to the end of their second three year term and he advised that if they wished to continue they will be required to go through the full re-application process. He noted that advertisements will appear in the national press week beginning 2 June 2008 with the closing date being 26 June 2008.
- 5.4 Oona Muirhead, Executive Director of Sustainable Prosperity, responded to a question about food waste relating to Creating a Pathway to a Zero Waste Region. She advised that work had been progressing quickly despite the ending of Defra funding. Analysis of the region's waste indicated that the greatest priorities were construction, food, biodegradable and wood waste.
- 5.5 Alan Durrant asked whether the availability of the final Daedalus masterplan was still scheduled for late spring 2008 and whether there would be another public meeting. Paul Lovejoy confirmed the deadline and indicated that he would provide a subsequent update on whether a public meeting was to be held.
- 5.6 Douglas Horner suggested that it would be helpful to invite specialist agricultural colleges and agricultural societies to Leader Local Action Groups for the South East Rural Development Programme for England 2007-13. Oona Moorhead welcomed this suggestion.
- 5.7 He further asked whether training being offered under South East Excellence duplicated the Regional Housing Board's (RHB's) training programme on Section 106. Paul Lovejoy did not believe this was the case. The Director of Development confirmed that the RHB has a programme of work in hand to address the barriers to delivery of affordable housing. The South East Excellence work complements this.

- 5.8 Roger House, whilst welcoming the involvement of big business in Corporate Social Responsibility, asked what SEEDA was doing in respect to the small business sector which constituted the largest part of the region's economy. Paul Lovejoy indicated that he understood that meetings had taken place with Jeff Alexander and offered to follow up the matter.
- 5.9 Roger House advised that meetings with Jeff Alexander had focused on business simplification not Corporate Social Responsibility. He expressed concern about the difficulties of communicating with SEEDA. Paul Lovejoy undertook to pursue the issue.

b) Agency Activity Report, 21 March 2008

- 5.10 Ian Hepburn strongly supported the establishment of the Ecological Footprints Diamonds Policy Group and praised the anticipated early achievement of targets relating to carbon/water reductions and the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4.
- 5.11 Cllr Myles Cullen asked whether SEEDA's Flood Relief Fund extended to the coastal defences. Paul Lovejoy committed to report back to the next meeting.

The Chairman thanked Paul Lovejoy for his report.

6. SEEDA's Corporate Plan – final submission

- 6.1 SEEDA's 'Response to the Regional Assembly Select Committee of 13 February on SEEDA's Corporate Plan' was circulated immediately prior to the meeting.
- 6.2 Barbara Hammond reported that the Corporate Plan had been submitted to Ministers on 10 April 2008. She was confident that wide consultation would ensure it was robust in terms of government policy. She acknowledged that the late tabling of SEEDA's response meant that the Assembly had not been able to comment on the final submission.
- 6.3 She advised that the plan's central purpose was to deliver the RES. It was hoped to have ministerial approval in late May 2008. She also reported that the Corporate Plan had taken the consultation on the SNR into account.
- 6.4 A number of points were made during discussion.
- Concern was expressed that the Executive Committee had not been able to view the final document prior to its submission to Government.
 - It was noted with disappointment that the route map for a single strategy had not been included.
 - An assurance was sought that SEEDA's funding alignment for deprived areas will continue.

- The need to retain the knowledge, skills and capacity of the Assembly was emphasised.
 - The Chairman hoped that SEEDA's Chairman and Board had driven the strategy rather than merely being kept informed as had been reported. He indicated that SEEDA will be subject to considerable public scrutiny under the new arrangements.
 - The Local Government Association's view was that the issues of accountability and governance had not been satisfactorily addressed in the SNR consultation document, and that it is for regions to suggest arrangements to ensure accountability to local communities.
 - The Select Committee had a clear expectation that over half of SEEDA's funding should be delegated by the end of the period and there was concern that SEEDA's response to this was insufficient.
- 6.5 Barbara Hammond explained that the delay in the production of the final submission was due to central government taking longer than anticipated to convey the consultation response.
- 6.6 She confirmed that the plan makes explicit reference to the spatial priorities of Dover, Thanet and Hastings.
- 6.7 She assured the Committee that SEEDA's Chief Executive was mindful of the need to retain the knowledge, skills and capacity of the Assembly in planning the transition to the new arrangements.
- 6.8 She assured the Committee that SEEDA's Chairman and Board had driven the strategy and had been kept informed in the final stages.
- 6.9 She acknowledged the points made with respect to governance. Whilst SEEDA is currently unclear about how to progress the issue the Board recognises the extent of the new responsibilities and the size of the challenge.
- 6.10 She accepted the points made with respect to delegation and noted that SEEDA expects to move into new territory where main programmes are shaped with local partners.
- 6.11 Paul Lovejoy referred to the challenge faced by SEEDA in reconciling the wish of the Select Committee with the wording of the consultation document. Referring specifically to page 23, para 3.8 of the document he acknowledged that although delegation of funding was still to be resolved by central government, he believed the wording implied a more complex approach to delegation than funding being held regionally or transferred to local authorities.
- 6.12 The Chairman observed that the initial statements about SNR emphasised the increase in local government power. The key message had been that additional SEEDA funding would be allocated in return for the loss of planning powers.

The message now seems to be that there will be loss of planning powers but the commitment to delegation is weaker.

The Committee **noted** the report.

7. 'Prosperous Places': Sub-National Review Consultation Document – Report of Chief Executive

7.1 The Chief Executive asked the Committee to identify concerns, to be included in the Assembly's response, prior to the next meeting of the Committee on 13 June 2008. He reported that the Leadership Group will also give consideration to the key issues.

7.2 He outlined the timetable for discussions. The Task and Finish Group, established by South East councils, was due to meet in early May 2008. He referred to the consultation events on 12 and 13 May 2008, the Advisory Group of Local Authority Chief Executives and to ongoing discussion with SEEDA and GOSE.

7.3 The Chairman noted that other regions, nearly all of which have Local Government Associations (LGAs), seem to be further ahead than the South East. He advised that the North West region was close to replacing its assembly with a strategic partnership board which will carry out the Assembly's function. He advised that stakeholders seem to be emerging as a separate group in nearly all regions. He advised that a sense of urgency was needed to drive the meeting of the working group in May to ensure that a decision was reached.

7.4 A number of points were made during discussion.

- It was suggested that elected members and stakeholders commit to creating a joint model for future working.
- The current arrangements provided a unique forum for stakeholders to add value, provide challenge, raise issues which otherwise might not be considered and be part of the decision making process.
- Stakeholders do not believe that they would be able to provide their current contribution as consultees to be 'engaged and managed' by SEEDA.
- Concern was expressed about increasing levels of bureaucracy and the subsequent reduction in the role of local government.
- A suggestion was put forward that the Executive Committee consider an imaginative way forward, incorporating local authority leadership, replicating LAAs agreed by Local Strategic Partnerships. Such a solution would be a response to central government's suggestion that regions devise their own solutions and would not undermine local government.

- 7.5 The Chairman believed there was a clear separation between local government signing off the strategy and the stakeholders being engaged in the process. He indicated that local authorities were mindful that, irrespective of local government sign off, RDAs would be required to submit the document to Government noting any differences. Local authorities are therefore sceptical about the extent of their future role.
- 7.6 Ian Chisnall proposed that, “The Executive Committee agrees to work together as one committee to come up with a solution that will work for the South East.” The proposal was seconded by Alan Durrant. This proposition was lost by 12 votes in favour to 13 votes against.
- 7.7 The Chairman asked members to consider a workable way forward before the next meeting on 13 June 2008.

The Committee **noted** that the Government’s consultation document on implementing the Sub-National Review (SNR) was published on 31 March and that a proposed response on the Assembly’s behalf will be brought to the next meeting of the Committee on 13 June 2008.

8. ‘Delivering the South East Plan’ progress report – Report of Director of Development

- 8.1 The Director of Development emphasised the importance of a clear, consistent framework for local authority and partner delivery to enable leverage of additional resources from the private sector.
- 8.2 He welcomed members’ comments and suggested that future regional monitoring should consist of an annual data report and an interpretive narrative which extracted the data’s key messages.
- 8.3 Douglas Horner emphasised the importance of identifying the decision makers in Annex I.
- 8.4 Ian Hepburn noted the important link between the processes for implementation and monitoring and suggested that it would be helpful to include a SEEDA representative on the Monitoring Advisory Group. The Director confirmed that this was being developed through work on the Regional Delivery Plan.
- 8.5 Karen Stalbow suggested that an effective case for funding for affordable housing could only be made if the success related to homelessness prevention and temporary accommodation targets was acknowledged. She asked whether progress against national housing targets is noted. She also believed that it was important to record affordable housing delivered through Section 106 agreements.
- 8.6 The Director explained that these issues had been responded to by the RHB and were included in the Regional Monitoring Report. He advised that 2007 was the first year that the Assembly had collated information, with the

assistance of local authorities, on the split between housing delivery with and without grant.

The Committee:

1. **Noted** the progress that has been made on delivering the actions set out in the Implementation Plan.
2. **Agreed** that the Regional Monitoring Report should, in future, be designed to capture and report activities essential for delivery of the Implementation Plan in addition to, and to complement, monitoring outcomes against indicators.

9. Response to the Select Committee on Reducing the South East's Ecological Footprint - Report of the Head of Policy

- 9.1 In introducing the report the Head of Policy drew attention to the proviso that resources, which were still to be agreed, were needed to deliver the timetabled actions. He acknowledged SEEDA's input and invited Oona Muirhead to comment on the detail.
- 9.2 Oona Muirhead reported that SEEDA welcomed the report of the Select Committee and in particular the actions required of regional and local stakeholders working in partnership. She emphasised both the importance and urgency of the work and reported that SEEDA will work closely with the Assembly to address the challenging targets of the South East Plan and the RES. She referred to the importance of leverage to transform aspirations into actions through LAAs.
- 9.3 Ian Hepburn reported that the South East Forum for Sustainability greatly welcomed the recommendations.
- 9.4 The Head of Policy reported that the next select committee will focus on SEEDA's strategy and action in the region's coastal areas. He encouraged responses to the consultation which will end on the 14 May 2008 prior to the meeting of the Select Committee on 5 June 2008. Ian Chisnall urged each group to select the most suitable representative to ensure the highest level of response.

The Committee **noted** the report.

10. Financial Report for the Third Quarter - Report of the Director of Finance and Administration

- 10.1 The Director of Finance and Administration advised that CLG funding for the new financial year was still to be confirmed. In response to a question she said she was satisfied that there was not a significant overspend on Assembly travel costs.

The Committee **noted** the report.

11. Reports of Committees:

a) Regional Health Summit, 22 January 2008

- 11.1 The Chairman noted with regret that the increasing focus on the Assembly's core planning function in the period of transition may mean that work on health will reduce. The Head of Policy explained that this was being discussed with the Strategic Health Authority, SEEDA and others.
- 11.2 Cllr David Neighbour asked for a list of attendees to be circulated electronically. This was **agreed**.

The Committee **noted** the report.

b) Social Dialogue Forum, 10 March 2008

The Committee **noted** the report.

c) Regional Planning Committee, 19 March 2008

The Committee **noted** the report.

d) Joint Europe Committee Minutes, 22 February 2008

The Committee **noted** the minutes.

12. Any Other Business

- 12.1 There being no further business the meeting closed at 12.50.
- 12.2 Date of next meeting: Friday, 13 June 2008 at 10.30 at the Institute of Materials, 1 Carlton House Terrace, London.