

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2005**

**Present:** Keith Mitchell (Chairman)  
Louise Bloom  
Sheila Campbell  
Michael Chater  
Ian Chisnall  
Barry Clout  
Chris Corrigan  
Christine Davis  
Christine Field  
Tim Hall  
Paul Harvey  
Alan Hopkins  
Douglas Horner  
Roger House  
Gordon Keymer, CBE  
Pam Palmer  
Jerry Patterson  
Linda Richards  
David Shakespeare, OBE  
Nick Skellett  
Mick Stevens  
Cec Tallack  
Don Turner

**In Attendance:** Paul Bevan, Chief Executive  
Diana Pogson, secretariat  
Heather Bolton, secretariat  
Philip Craig, secretariat  
Irene Cripps, secretariat  
Alistair Moses, secretariat  
Colin Byrne, GOSE  
Sheila Hopson, GOSE  
Pam Alexander, SEEDA  
Duncan Straughen, SEEDA  
Eileen Armstrong, SEEDA  
Rolfe Showell, Assembly Partners Support Unit

The Chairman opened the meeting by introducing the new members of the Committee. He advised the Committee that Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart had stood down from the Assembly that week and thanked him for his outstanding contributions during his tenure; this was endorsed by Douglas Horner.

## 1. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Substitutes

Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, OBE (Christine Field attended as substitute, as well as in her role of Chairman of the Regional Planning Committee)

Alison Cook

Tony Reid

Douglas Horner drew the Committee's attention to the number of business interests he has in the region; he assured the Committee that he complies with the Assembly's rules on such issues, as advised by the Assembly's secretariat.

## 2. Minutes of the Meeting on 17 June 2005

The Minutes were **agreed and signed** as a true record of the meeting, subject to the following amendments (in italics):

### a) Agenda Item 5 - SEEDA Report:

- i) Agency Activity Report, 26 May 2005, third bullet point should read:

*“Item 31 - the Textile Conservation Centre is in Winchester, as part of the University of Southampton.”*

- ii) The final paragraph should read:

*“..... region; equally businesses had emphasised the need for a healthy and growing economy.”*

### b) Agenda Item 6 - Report of the Select Committee on Manufacturing:

Eighth paragraph, seventh line should read:

*“..... communications, housing, long-term .....”*

## 3. Matters Arising

### a) Item 4a - Regional Emphasis Document (RED)

Responding to the question how will the Assembly input to the RED, the Chief Executive explained that as the Government's Spending Review will now be conducted in 2007 the timetable for the RED had also been put back. It could be seen from the later agenda item on the Regional Funding Allocations (RFAs) that these have a similar timetable to that of the RED, and that arrangements have been made to enable Assembly members and constituent stakeholders to contribute.

- b) Item 6 - Report of the Select Committee on Manufacturing: recommendation (iii)

Responding to the question of what is SEEDA planning to do about commissioning case study research on off-shoring, Pam Alexander informed the Committee that she would take advice on this issue and report back.

- c) Item 7 - Transfer of the Regional Housing Board (RHB)

The Chief Executive commented that although the announcement had been made early in the year, the current ODPM stocktake had delayed the publication of the guidance on the transfer of the RHB. Colin Byrne said he could not enlighten the Committee as to when Government is likely to make the final decision.

#### 4. GOSE Report

Colin Byrne said that the first priority over the next few months is to negotiate Local Area Agreements (LAAs); there were nine in the region. GOSE is looking for submissions by 28 September and broadly speaking everything is on track. The timetable is tight and he thanked the councils, community and voluntary sector and police for seconding people to deal with this process. There are a variety of approaches across the region to writing these - some are bottom up, involving partners at an early stage, and some top down; different governance arrangements have come out of the process. GOSE will ensure that all partners have been engaged in this; the challenge is to make sure that the process adds value by realising outcomes. The aim is to sign-off the whole process in December.

The ODPM stocktake has evolved during the months it has been underway; it is an internal examination looking at ways to improve delivery of the Government's priorities. Housing and Planning is still seen as one of the top ten issues.

The new Minister at ODPM, David Miliband, is currently visiting the eight core cities and challenging them to see how they are going to unlock their apparent advantages in relation to their European counterparts in respect of leadership, unique identifying factors, infrastructure, public service and public resources. The Government is going to publish a second report on the state of the cities in January/February 2006; it is likely that the evolution of policies will be seen then.

The post of Regional Director has been advertised around Whitehall and will be filled from within Whitehall; interviews will be held in mid-October and it is hoped that an announcement will be made by end of that month as to who will take up the post, probably in the New Year. He believed that there would be a level of external stakeholder involvement.

During the following debate concern was expressed that the concept of city regions does not readily fit the South East. City authorities want to extend their influence beyond their boundaries. A lot of money has gone into cities since the early 1990s; the difference between shires and cities has adjusted but Government wants to go in the other direction with the emphasis on cities - this is a question of resources and boundaries.

The point was made that if there must be city regions then the ninth is London and the South East. However, establishing leadership in the South East is a very difficult matter; there is a need for leadership where there is a community of interest. The importance of the scale and economy of the South East make it essential that resources are not detracted.

The Chairman asked the Committee what action it wanted to take in respect of city regions, to advise the Government of its fears and to make suggestions?

Pam Alexander commented that there is a need to recognise that the focus on core cities is to reduce differences between other areas and the South East; it is a way of directing investment.

Responding, Colin Byrne said he wanted to track the focus on city regions to see how it can be used to the South East's advantage. He did not believe this is part of the Government's focus on the difference between London/South and the North. He understood the core driver is to address the underperformance of cities, which has been the case for a long time.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that he had already written to the Minister, David Miliband, on this subject after their July meeting.

## **Agreed**

To use the Chairman's follow-up letter as an opening to take forward the issue of city regions with the Minister, David Miliband.

## **5. SEEDA Report**

### **a) Agency Activity Reports to SEEDA Board**

#### **i) 23 June 2005**

The report was received and **noted**.

#### **ii) 19 July 2005**

Responding to the question of what had been the outcome following the Assembly's Manufacturing Select Committee's recommendation on the Manufacturing Advice Service (MAS), Pam Alexander advised the Executive that Peter Taylor is in charge of developing MAS and that she would ensure the

Assembly is informed of developments. Further to George Cox's report on creativity, more work is on-going and she will provide details.

The comment was made that only those organisations touched by SEEDA's work are aware of what SEEDA is doing, other organisations remain largely unaware. Perhaps this is a PR issue as SEEDA's work is very focussed.

Responding Pam Alexander said that she would take the comments on board; however SEEDA does not necessarily try to take credit for everything in which it is engaged. SEEDA has begun to think more about its relationships with partners, particularly in the business community.

b) SEEDA's Full Year Performance in Context

Pam Alexander reported that SEEDA is appraised in consultation with focus groups across the region against core targets and is the only RDA to have been given an 'excellent' appraisal; last year was 'good'. SEEDA had exceeded all key targets and core areas except one, i.e. the number of businesses created; the target had been missed by seven.

The comment was made that the Select Committee on Enterprise Hubs had recommended that the administrative burden be taken from hub directors to allow them to concentrate on core business and this appeared not to have happened. Pam Alexander said she was not aware of this and will check on the situation.

c) Progress of Regional Economic Strategy Review

Several points were raised following Pam Alexander's presentation:

- The consultation document will be widely circulated across the region in November 2005; the RES will then be submitted to Government in early 2006.
- It was good that the RES will grapple with some of the hard choices to be made, e.g. the unresolved tensions around sustainable development of growth in the economy and the environmental costs. The challenge for the Assembly is that the RES cannot do this on its own; the Assembly needs to support it.
- It is competitiveness that counts, rather than simply growth. What constitutes competitiveness is changing staggeringly fast at the moment and the ability of business to continue to

deliver wealth and prosperity can change with extraordinary speed therefore the ability to change is vital.

- The message seems to be pan-regional but it is different for each part of the region. There is uncertainty about the message from Government; it seems to be to maintain the quality of life. The region must, of course, remain competitive; looking for growth with Government support is not so clear.
- If growth is to be sustained as well as competitiveness then energy issues need to be addressed, not just to maintain quality of life but also for production. If the nuclear energy issue is neglected then the country will fall more and more behind as other countries are going down that route.
- Large employers will not stay in the region if the quality of life falls.
- It was thought there is huge complacency in the education system, e.g. about the lack of skills; reference was made to the IPPR report and the number of young people not in full-time employment, education or training. There is a growing disinclination in a section of the population to engage with the world of work.

Pam Alexander said she hoped that the RES would translate the conflict that was apparent from the issues raised. She believed the “three legs of the stool” were now competition, infrastructure and quality of life rather than environment, economy and social issues. There is a need to address the competition needs of the strong parts of the region, as well as those of the under-performing and less successful.

## **6. Report of the Select Committee on Poverty and Social Inclusion**

Michael Chater, who had chaired the Committee, introduced the report. Following this various points were raised:

- It was felt that local authorities had dealt with the problems raised under point 5.3 and this was just revisiting them. Following on from the work of the LEAs to look at efficiency flexibilities, it would be useful if the Committee looked at that; it would also be useful if the Assembly championed those flexibilities.
- If LAAs and LSPs are going to be taken forward, the relationship between them and how they can help with the issue of social inclusion could be made clearer.

- Key recommendations are 3, 4 and 10. A proper audit is vital; a local one had highlighted how much duplication there is. Funding and sustaining that funding are key.
- It would be useful if the report highlighted just how successful this work is; can get something set up and get really good results.
- Recommendation 8 on funding is also vital. Any influence that can be brought to bear would be very helpful.
- LSPs and the way in which they approach work seems to vary hugely around the region.

The Chief Executive said that ordinarily the report would be submitted to SEEDA for a response but, as Michael Chater had said, this is a broader issue and he would take this forward with SEEDA and GOSE. He would bring back a response in due course. This was **agreed**.

### **Agreed**

That the Committee receive this report of the Select Committee's examination of social inclusion in the region and agree its recommendations:

Recommendation 1 - The introduction of Local Area Agreements offers an opportunity for all agencies in the region to re-examine the delivery of their programmes or funding to areas of deprivation.

Recommendation 2 - The Committee believes there should be a renewed emphasis on devolved delivery, with flexibility to allow innovation and experimentation at the appropriate local level, while retaining necessary controls over the use of public funds.

Recommendation 3 - Regional bodies need to recognise the diversity of organisations involved in social inclusion and think imaginatively about mechanisms for involvement, including time limited working groups and the better use of technology to share information.

Recommendation 4 - There is a need for an independent audit of the fragmented set of partnerships working at a regional level to allow for a clearer differentiation of roles and some rationalisation.

Recommendation 5 - Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) need to be representative of all the key agencies that contribute to social inclusion. The Government Office for the South East (GOSE), through its negotiations with local authorities on Local Area Agreements, should ensure that LSPs are better able to promote social inclusion through effective governance arrangements.

Recommendation 6 - If it is to have any continuing impact, the Social Inclusion Statement should be updated to reflect national, regional and local policy changes and new ways of working. There is a strong argument for strengthening the Statement's emphasis on the delivery of mainstream public services in an integrated manner that address the economic and community weaknesses of deprived places.

Recommendation 7 - The Social Inclusion Partnership South East (SIPSE) has a role over the next 12 months in leading the review of the Social Inclusion Statement and its effective dissemination. To achieve this, SIPSE will need to demonstrate more effective leadership and greater local engagement. The revised statement should lead to an evaluation of the effectiveness and future direction of SIPSE.

Recommendation 8 - The region (led by the Assembly, SEEDA and GOSE) should use their influence to lobby Government, asking that funding allocations should more fully reflect the dispersed nature of deprivation in the region and the true costs of service delivery.

Recommendation 9 - The regional bodies (SEEDA, the Assembly, GOSE and RAISE) must work together over the next six months to identify where progress can be made on funding issues. Practical first steps would include identifying ways to better disseminate information on funding opportunities and moves to simplify the costs and time associated with bidding for funds.

Recommendation 10 - In the longer term, a more joined-up approach is required to ensure that social inclusion work is adequately and efficiently funded. The aim should be to increasingly devolve responsibility closer to local delivery bodies, in terms of conditions for grants and in monitoring of outcomes. As the bulk of resources available to reduce social exclusion in the region are provided through mainstream programmes, there is a need to fully engage mainstream providers as partners in this process and seek more flexible use of mainstream funding.

## **7. Regional Funding Allocations**

The paper was introduced by the Head of Policy; the Chief Executive advised the Committee that it was proposed to hold a workshop on this during the afternoon of 16 December 2005, following the Executive Committee meeting.

During the following debate it was requested that consideration be given to how the environmental sector is included in the stakeholder group. In response to the question why had London not been included in the financial table annexed to the report, the Head of Policy advised that the funding for London is handled differently to that for the English regions; this was confirmed by Colin Byrne.

## **Agreed**

That the Committee note the announcement of regional funding allocations for transport, housing and economic development and endorse the process suggested for producing regional advice to Government.

## **8. Nominations to the Committee of the Regions**

Responding to a question on eligibility for CoR membership, Gordon Keymer advised the Committee that the Treaty of Nice states that nominees must have an electoral mandate; further that the full title of the Committee is Committee of the Regions and Local Government. It is very important to have a team of people prepared to support local government on the CoR.

## **Agreed**

That the Executive Committee endorse the following nominations to the Committee of the Regions made by the Assembly Chairman and Vice-Chairs on its behalf:

Full member: Cllr Gordon Keymer, Conservative, Tandridge  
Alternate: Cllr Paula Baker, Liberal Democrat, Basingstoke

## **9. Report of the Chief Executive**

The Chief Executive introduced the report. During the ensuing discussion various points were raised:

- Annex 2, the Arup evaluation of the Assembly (report item 4) contained an error in the last sentence of the first paragraph under point 1.1.1; the first chair of the Assembly had been a LibDem representative, not Conservative as stated.
- Referring to item 4, the Assembly's statutory consultee role, concern was expressed that there may not be a consensus amongst members on certain policy matters.

Responding, the Chief Executive explained that applications are evaluated against already agreed policies. Until the South East Plan is agreed, applications will be judged against RPG9. The consultants will be assessing applications in almost a tick box fashion.

Christine Field, Chairman of the RPC, explained that it is not members responding to an application but about compliance with policy. The group consists of one member from each group on the RPC, to see if they feel the consultants' view is fair and reasonable. There will be a review of how this process is working in February 2006. She would report the outcome to the Executive Committee.

The Chief Executive advised the Committee that he had already received some comments concerning a review of stakeholder representation, and he had spoken to the economic partnerships about this the day before.

Responding to the suggestion that the Assembly Partners Support Unit be included in the review, the Chief Executive said that he has quarterly meetings with the unit and its clients to review performance and that he would be reluctant to cloud the issue of stakeholder representation with the performance of the unit.

The Chairman said that a review of stakeholder representation would be discussed by the Leadership Group and a report brought back to the Executive.

### **Agreed**

The Committee received and noted the report.

## **10. Financial Report**

The Finance and Administration Director introduced the report. She explained that the next financial report would cover the six month period to the end of September 2005.

### **Agreed**

That the Committee note the report.

## **11. Regional Planning Committee, 27 July 2005**

Christine Field, Chairman of the RPC, advised the Committee that subsequent to the July meeting there had been a special meeting on 5 September to consider the RPC's response to the Government's consultation on planning for housing provision, which she had referred to under item 12 of this report. Brian Hackland from the ODPM had given a presentation on the consultation. Affordability had largely been ignored in the paper, taking the view expressed in the Barker Review that this can be generated by increasing land availability; the overriding aim is to increase housing provision. The Committee was concerned, as ever, at the lack of emphasis on infrastructure. The consultation document had been issued immediately after Parliament had gone into recess with a response time to the end of the Summer, giving only eight weeks' consultation not the usual twelve. The RPC was advised that PPS3 is to be published in the Autumn and this was only a precursor. The RPC had grave concerns about what it saw.

### **Agreed**

That the Executive receive the report.

## 12. Reports of SEEDA Board Committees

- a) Social Dialogue Forum, 18 July 2005

The report was received and **noted**.

- b) Joint Europe Committee, 22 July 2005

The Minutes were received and **noted**.

- c) Combined Sustainable Development Committee  
and Social Inclusion Committee, 8 September 2005

The report was received and **noted**.

- d) Social Dialogue Forum, 14 September 2005

It was **noted** that this meeting had been cancelled after the publication of the Executive Committee agenda.

## 13. SEERA Ltd AGM

The Executive Committee meeting broke to convene the Annual General Meeting of SEERA Ltd.

See separate Minutes.

At the end of the meeting the Executive Committee meeting was reconvened.

## 14. Any Other Business

There was none.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 13.10.