

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

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

**Present:** Keith Mitchell (Chairman)  
Mary Ballin  
Jill Baston  
Paul Carter  
Michael Chater  
Ian Chisnall  
Chris Corrigan  
Christine Field  
Tim Hall  
Paul Harvey  
Alan Hopkins  
Douglas Horner  
Roger House  
Gordon Keymer, CBE  
Pam Palmer  
Jerry Patterson  
Tony Reid  
David Shakespeare, OBE  
Mick Stevens  
Cec Tallack  
Don Turner

**In Attendance:** Paul Bevan, Chief Executive  
Heather Bolton, secretariat  
Diana Pogson, secretariat  
Philip Craig, secretariat  
Irene Cripps, secretariat  
Alistair Moses, secretariat  
Andrew Roberts, GOSE  
Sheila Hopson, GOSE  
Paul Lovejoy, SEEDA  
Eileen Armstrong, SEEDA  
Rolfe Showell, Assembly Partners Support Unit

**1. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Substitutes**

Louise Bloom  
Sheila Campbell (Jill Baston attended as substitute)  
Barry Clout  
Alison Cook (Christine Field attended as substitute, as well as in her role of  
Chairman of the Regional Planning Committee)  
Christine Davis  
Linda Richards  
Nick Skellett

## 2. Minutes of the Meeting on 21 October 2005

The Minutes were **agreed and signed** as a true record of the meeting.

## 3. Matters Arising

- a) Item 3 - Matters Arising: 3 (a) (a) (ii) Agency Activity Report, 19 July 2005

There was still no indication that SEEDA's promised engagement on the Manufacturing Advisory Service with organisations representing smaller businesses had occurred. Paul Lovejoy apologised for the lack of response and informed the Committee that he had followed this up with colleagues and that he would pursue the matter further.

- b) Item 6 - Regional Transport Board

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that, as no alternative methods of funding for the A3 Hindhead improvement project had been identified, the RTB would revise the draft transport investment programme to include that project which will mean that other schemes would slip.

- c) Item 11 - Any Other Business: 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph

It was noted that the requested liaison with the CBI regional office on the local government finance settlement had not taken place, for which apologies were given.

## 4. GOSE Report

Andrew Roberts informed the Committee that Colin Byrne had been unable to attend the meeting due to a visit by the Deputy Prime Minister.

He informed the Committee that the Government's response to the Barker review acknowledged the need for action on infrastructure and development incentives. The Government is clear that accelerated housing growth should have infrastructure investment in support. The new planning gain supplement will direct a significant majority of resources to local government. The Government had written to local authorities inviting applications to become new growth points. The Government has also announced a new draft code for sustainable buildings which covers energy, drainage, etc.

The Government Office is working with nine areas on Local Area Agreements (LAAs); all the draft submissions had been received by the deadline. However, none of the LAAs are ready for signing off at present; five are almost there but the remaining four still require quite a considerable amount of work.

Turning to the 2007 Spending Review, Andy Roberts told the Committee that the Treasury has not yet indicated what it wants in respect of a Regional

Emphasis Document (RED) but has indicated it will seek the region's advice in some form or another.

The timescale for the Regional Housing Boards is now envisaged in September 2006; however GOSE sees this date as a backstop and is trying to fast-track the process so that the transfer happens sooner.

With respect to local government reorganisation he explained that a wider debate is being promoted. It is expected that a paper will be published in mid-2006.

He advised the Committee that the new Regional Director, Rolande Anderson, will be in post from 4 January 2006.

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had written to Colin Byrne thanking him for his contributions to these meetings and wishing him well and that he looked forward to working with Rolande Anderson.

Concern was expressed that, as the definition of city regions is unclear, it will be difficult for regional assemblies to make provision to ensure appropriate representation, as required in the revised guidance to assemblies.

In respect of local government reorganisation the point was made that local authorities do not see debate as being constructive. Authorities are focused on delivery and this is even seen as an attempt to subvert local government.

The Chief Executive said it was very disappointing not to have received a response from the Minister to the Assembly's suggestion of an Infrastructure Concordat. The message on infrastructure, at last, seems to be getting through but it seems dismissive and rude of the Minister not to have responded to the letter and the request for a meeting.

The Chief Executive also asked for clarification about a current review of Government Office functions.

Responding, Andrew Roberts undertook to seek clarification from the Minister about city regions so that this could be reported to the January meeting of the Committee. He also noted the points made about local authority re-organisation. A meeting with Yvette Cooper was planned for the following Monday on a different issue but he undertook to remind the Minister that a response was awaited in connection with the proposed Infrastructure Concordat. He explained that the Treasury was currently undertaking a review of Government Offices from an efficiency standpoint.

## **5. SEEDA Report**

- a) Agency Activity Reports
  - i) Board Meeting on 27 October 2005

The report was received and noted.

ii) Board Meeting on 8 December 2005

The comment was made that the length of time taken by Government to make decisions is a cause of growing concern for business.

b) Verbal Report

Paul Lovejoy told the Committee that Pam Alexander had also sent her apologies due to the visit by the Deputy Prime Minister.

He told the Committee that, following the launch of the Regional Economic Strategy consultation at the Assembly's plenary meeting on 16 November, the document was now widely available. Valuable feedback had been received so far on how to bolster and improve the strategy. The consultation period ends on 17 February 2006.

He said that it was felt by all those concerned that a strong model of partnership working had been presented to David Miliband at his recent visit to South Hampshire which may have salience in defining what is expected of city regions.

He advised the Committee that the second South East Conference would be on 31 January 2006, subject to the final agenda. Indicative acceptances had been received from John Healey, Stephen Ladyman and Yvette Cooper. He confirmed that the conference would aim to engage community as well as political and business leaders.

Referring to the Comprehensive Spending Review, he told the Committee that Regional Development Agency Chief Executives had met with Treasury officials after the pre-budget report; spending growth is projected to decline by between 3% and 4% within the review period. It is expected that the forthcoming process will include close scrutiny of RDAs and their scope and focus and there will be work to introduce a new form of performance assessment in the next year.

## 6. SEEDA Scrutiny

The Head of Policy introduced the report.

### Agreed

1. That the Committee agree the following topics for the scrutiny programme of SEEDA for 2006:
  - a) Sustainable use of natural resources
  - b) Social enterprise
  - c) Business support and Business Links
2. That the Committee note progress relating to the recommendations of the Select Committee on Poverty and Social Inclusion.

## 7. Report of the Chief Executive

Referring to the transfer of the Regional Housing Board, the Chief Executive said he saw the Minister's letter as an opportunity for the Assembly to assert its 'fitness for purpose' which he sees as relatively unproblematic. Further clarification on city regions would be helpful. He thought it would not be necessary to bring this back to the Committee, unless the Committee particularly wanted him to but he should take it to the Assembly's Leadership Group. The Assembly and GOSE are as one in trying to bring forward the transfer to April 2006.

Referring to progress on the stakeholder review, he said that members wished to strengthen the business voice but discussions had still to be concluded. One further place can be made available in this sector and discussions are on-going but he invited agreement to get these proposals established. He explained that, within the Constitution, it is possible for the Executive Committee to make these changes mid-year, if appropriate, so that new members could be invited to the Assembly plenary in March 2006 if that was its wish.

The Social and Environmental Partners welcomed the review and are keen to see the stakeholder group as having "cohesion across the piece" and support the Chief Executive's report; they look forward to the final seat being filled but hope that the Assembly will continue to review its membership in the future, particularly where people do not take an active part.

The possibility was raised of identifying a major global company within the region to be represented on the Assembly, perhaps for a fixed term. Alternatively, perhaps consideration could be given to inviting a business representative to address the Assembly or that key people be invited into the debate.

Douglas Horner said he would not vote on the question of stakeholder representation as he believed the invitation to join the Assembly must come from the elected representatives.

The Chairman suggested that the Assembly Leadership Group should consider the comments made at this meeting and then refer the matter back to the Executive at a future meeting. This was **agreed**.

With regard to the Olympics, the comment was made that Sport England is key to improving sports facilities. However, four bids have been made to Sport England by Maidstone BC for £300k funding for school facilities and each has been unsuccessful because Sport England keeps changing what it requires in such bids. The Chief Executive agreed to raise Maidstone BC's concern about this with Sport England.

## **Agreed**

- I. To agree to the changes in stakeholder representation so far proposed, namely:
  - (i) The reduction in economic partnership places from ten to five, these to be nominated collectively through the South East Economic Partnerships group.
  - (ii) The offer of Assembly places to the Engineering Employers Federation South East, The Construction Industry Council South East, the South East Multi-Ethnic Development Agency and the UK Youth Parliament.
2. Otherwise to note the report.

## **8. Half-year Financial Report**

The Finance and Administration Director informed the Committee that the underspend was mostly due to the lack of transfer of the Regional Housing Board.

## **Agreed**

That the Committee note the report.

## **9. Regional Planning Committee, 7 December 2005**

The Chairman of the RPC said that she had met with John Duffy, the Mayor's waste advisor, on 14 December; this had been an interesting meeting and had established a useful channel of communication for the future.

## **Agreed**

That the Executive receive the report.

## **10. SEEDA Board Committees**

- a) Joint Europe Committee, 11 November 2005

The Chief Executive reported on the event in Brussels on 30 November to profile English Regions' contribution to growth and jobs; he hoped that members had received a copy of the Lisbon report, jointly produced by the English Regional Development Agencies and the English Regions Network.

He congratulated Gordon Keymer on his appointment as Leader of the UK Delegation of the Committee of the Regions.

Responding to the question about South East England House, Paul Lovejoy informed the Committee that a review was being held owing

to the break in the lease in July 2006. He expects a decision to be taken early in the New Year.

The report was received and **noted**.

- b) Inclusion Committee, 12 December 2005

The report was received and **noted**.

## 11. Any Other Business

The Chairman reported to the Committee on the various meetings he had attended since the last meeting on behalf of the Assembly.

- a) Visit by David Miliband to Portsmouth and Southampton, 22 November 2005 - he had sat next to the Minister at the dinner and they had had a robust exchange about local government re-organisation and other issues.
- b) Following the pre-budget announcement, he had attended a briefing given by Yvette Cooper on the Government's response to the Barker Report.
- c) Sir Rod Eddington had been commissioned by Gordon Brown to look at transport investment to promote economic growth; the South East meeting had been held on 12 December. Regional partners had put over some strong messages.

Douglas Horner informed the Committee that he had been present at a separate meeting with Sir Rod Eddington, who had been impressed by the appetite of the business sector for investment in transport infrastructure.

- d) Also on 12 December the Chairman had attended the ODPM Select Committee on affordable housing in his capacity as Chairman of the South East County Leaders; he had been accompanied by Nick Skellett. They had been grilled about the Assembly's approach to housing numbers and the Barker debate. The transcript will be available soon.
- e) On 15 December he had attended a regular meeting of the Assembly's Social and Environmental Partners. He had found the debate constructive.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.50.