

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 17 JUNE 2005**

**Present:** Nick Skellett (Chair)  
Mary Ballin  
Jill Baston  
Louise Bloom  
Sheila Campbell  
Michael Chater  
Ian Chisnall  
Barry Clout  
Alison Cook  
Chris Corrigan  
Norman Dingemans  
Gillian Ferguson  
Alan Hopkins  
Nigel Horton-Baker  
Roger House  
Christina Howell  
Janet Keene  
Gordon Keymer, CBE  
David Kirk  
Keith Mitchell  
Pam Palmer  
Tony Reid  
David Shakespeare, OBE  
Cec Tallack  
Don Turner  
Paul Watkins

**In Attendance:** Paul Bevan, Chief Executive  
Mike Gwilliam, secretariat  
Carol Hodson, secretariat  
Heather Bolton, secretariat  
Philip Craig, secretariat  
Irene Cripps, secretariat  
Alistair Moses, secretariat  
Paul Martin, GOSE  
Chris Drew, GOSE  
Pam Alexander, SEEDA  
Paul Lovejoy, SEEDA  
Sue Archer, Assembly Partners Support Unit

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

Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart, OBE (Paul Watkins attended as substitute)  
Alison Cook (Keith Mitchell attended as substitute until her arrival, as well as  
in his role of Chairman of the Regional Planning Committee)  
Douglas Horner (Nigel Horton-Baker attended as substitute)  
Royce Longton (Gillian Ferguson attended as substitute)

## 2. **Minutes of the Meeting on 8 April 2005**

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

## 3. **Matters Arising**

### a) Item 6a - European Update: Joint Europe Committee

The Chief Executive advised the Committee that the constitution of the JEC had been discussed further by the Chair and Vice-Chairs Group on 8 April and their decision remained unchanged; the JEC would review its ways of working at their July meeting, but would not be asked to reconsider issues of representation.

David Kirk registered his disappointment with that decision and said he would continue to press his concerns.

## 4. **GOSE Report**

Paul Martin said there were two items on which to report, namely the preparation of the Regional Emphasis Document (RED) and the roll-out of Local Area Agreements (LAAs).

- a) On the RED, he reminded the Committee that last time each region had been asked to put together its idea of priorities for the 2004 Spending Review and that the South East's submission had been one of the more influential ones. The time-frame for the current document, which will be used to inform on the 2006 Spending Review, requires that the work is carried out between now and December, although guidance is not expected until July. Government wants each region to consider how its transport, housing and economic development spending should work together, ensuring alignment and greater effectiveness. He had already met with local authority Chief Executives, Paul Bevan and Paul Lovejoy to discuss the process through which the RED will be created; the Assembly will be an important part of that architecture.

During the discussion the view was expressed that social and environmental issues should be included early on, rather than during the 'fine tuning' as last time. Paul Martin said he would take this on board.

- b) On the roll-out of LAAs, the Government is expected to announce the next round on 22 June. David Miliband is enthusiastic about these and the RDAs will be involved in a more fundamental way than last time around because of the new 'fourth block' relating to economic development. All but three of the region's remaining 17 county and unitary councils have indicated they would like to be involved this year; over the next two years every area will benefit from a LAA.

Finally Paul Martin explained that this would be his last Executive Committee meeting as he would be leaving GOSE in September to become the Chief Executive of the London Borough of Sutton. The Chair thanked him for his contribution to the discussions of the Committee during his time at GOSE.

## 5. SEEDA Report

- a) Agency Activity Reports to SEEDA Board  
on 26 April 2005 and 26 May 2005

The reports were received by the Committee. During discussion the following points were made:

26 April report:

- Items 63 to 65, White Paper on Skills - concern was expressed about the number of different bodies involved in the delivery of skills and it was asked if the Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) are another. It seems the skills agenda is not being delivered because everyone thinks someone else is doing it.

Responding, Pam Alexander advised the Committee that that is the reason for the RSPs, to bring players together and create focus.

26 May report:

- Item 33, Mid-Sussex Demand Responsive Transport Project - this project was welcomed.
- Item 91, 'Save the South' Campaign - Pam Alexander regretted that the Portsmouth News had misquoted a member of staff.
- Item 31 - the Textile Conservation Centre is in Winchester, not Southampton.

In respect of the Regional Economic Strategy review, discussions will start next month with all stakeholders. They will look at what differentiates the South East and what the infrastructure needs are to support this. Discussions with representatives of business organisations in the region had taken place earlier in the week; it was very clear that the message from businesses confirms the Assembly's view that without the infrastructure we cannot sustain a high quality of life in the region.

## 6. Report of the Select Committee on Manufacturing

Roger House, who had chaired the Committee, introduced the paper, thanking all those who had taken part. Points raised during the following discussion were:

- The paper refers to the threat to jobs from competition from China and India but the whole of the South East Plan is predicated on economic expansion.

In response, the Head of Policy explained that there is a shift from the manufacturing sector to services.

Responding to a question about off-shoring, the Chief Executive thought the Select Committee had been concerned to clarify risks and benefits and that these should be researched and exemplified. It would be for SEEDA to decide how the results of such work would be disseminated.

The Head of Policy apologised for the inconsistent figures in the report and explained that the correct figures were those shown in the table at 3.1; the paper would be amended before formal submission to SEEDA.

- Roger House agreed with the view that SMEs do not know what is available to them in the way of services and advice. Responding to the comment about intellectual property, Roger House said that business people need to realise that they can do with some help. He also felt that more needs to be done with teachers, not just pupils; youngsters need to be taught to be inquisitive.

Answering a question about the pressure on brownfield land for housing development, the Chief Executive advised the Committee that there are policies in the Plan to protect employment land.

Pam Alexander welcomed the focus on this area and the work of the Select Committee. She thought that one of the most strong messages is the importance of skills for the future. For example, the national roll-out of computer clubs for girls was launched this week. The clubs encourage girls to think of careers in IT, and the need to be computer literate for their working future. It is also important to recognise that it is not just the skills infrastructure but also transport, communications, long-term energy and water infrastructures that are important. She agreed that we need to make sure that small and medium enterprises find their way quickly to the advice they need.

### **Agreed**

The Committee received the draft report of the Select Committee's examination of SEEDA's impact on manufacturing and agreed its recommendations:

- (i) In view of the importance of manufacturing to the region, as lead RDA nationally on manufacturing, SEEDA should lobby DTI for greater

regional devolution of resources for best practice, sectors and innovation in the 2006 Spending Review.

- (ii) The MAS cannot be the 'be all and end all': SEEDA are already working on a range of relevant interventions, and should work with EEF SE, the CBI, FSB and other appropriate bodies to identify other measures to promote the retention and liberate the growth of manufacturing in the region.
- (iii) SEEDA should take the lead in commissioning case study research so that manufacturers contemplating off-shoring can take properly informed decisions and, where it is an appropriate course of action, are able to manage it successfully, safeguarding intellectual property and other assets, so as to ensure the survival of a healthy manufacturing sector in the region.
- (iv) SEEDA should ensure that the Regional Skills for Productivity Alliance (RSPA) urgently develops and delivers an action plan for manufacturing skills in the South East, covering, inter alia:
  - clarification of sources of information and funding, and of means of delivery;
  - up to date research to determine the future skills requirements of modern manufacturing;
  - stronger links to local employers' forums;
  - promotion to young people of engineering, applied IT, craft and other key skills required for a competitive manufacturing sector; and
  - sustaining and modernising the region's education and training capacity for such skills development.
- (v) Following completion of the current re-tendering of the MAS for 2005-08, SEEDA should review its scope, reach, length of contract and resources with a view to stepping up the service to meet the scale of the challenges faced by the region's manufacturing; for example reaching more SMEs, and taking in skills issues, are both areas to be addressed.
- (vi) In its next phase (2005-08), the MAS needs to develop its emphasis beyond process innovation onto product innovation, particularly by linking more closely with centres for research and development.
- (vii) The Regional Assembly should ensure that the South East Plan provides for the land, premises and infrastructure to support a modern and competitive manufacturing sector in the region.

## **7. Transfer of the Regional Housing Board (RHB)**

The Director of Planning and Transport introduced the paper, commenting that Government guidance was still awaited. Letters had been received from Shelter, RAISE and the National Housing Federation about the Board's

operation, but he suggested these issues should be dealt with in the light of the guidance when it is received.

Responding to the question whether the Government really intends to go ahead with this transfer, Paul Martin confirmed that the Government is clearly committed to this and he thought it best to get on with it, irrespective of the wait for guidance.

Responding to criticism about the make-up of the Board, the Chief Executive said it is important not to see the RHB as a committee of the Assembly but as a partnership board. He also thought the Board will have a certain level of autonomy; if there is a difference of opinion between the Board and the Assembly this should be exposed rather than overridden. He confirmed the additional resource requirements had been met by the ODPM.

In respect of support staff, Paul Martin advised the Committee that the existing members of staff doing this work are career civil servants, without a housing background, and they will move on to other policy areas. The additional resources made available will allow the Assembly to undertake open recruitment.

In response to a comment about engagement with housing authorities and other bodies, the Director of Planning and Transport said the Regional Housing Forum would continue to be an important way of making such connections.

The Chief Executive emphasised the principle of continuity; SEEDA has been against the transfer and is not alone in this, therefore he thought that before changing the make-up, the Board should initially be kept as it is, listening to the concerns of others, and review the situation if the Government's guidance has anything specific on this issue. He would not expect to make any suggestions about changing the Assembly's constitution until the November plenary.

Pam Alexander advised the Committee that SEEDA's concern is that the South East has been seen to have a very effective Board so far and therefore attracted more funding than would have otherwise been the case; SEEDA was therefore pleased at the suggestion of continuity.

## **Agreed**

- I. That the Committee agreed to the proposals for arrangements to transfer responsibility for the operation of the Regional Housing Board, summarised as follows:
  - i) So far as possible, the principle of continuity should be followed with modest changes to current arrangements as necessary.
  - ii) The RHB should continue to exist as a partnership body with the same constituent bodies.

- iii) The Board should comprise non-executive members with an Assembly chair, supported by an officer team.
  - iv) The Board should be positioned alongside the Regional Planning Committee within the Assembly structure and the Assembly constitution amended accordingly.
  - v) The RHB chair should be an ex-officio member of the Assembly Executive.
  - vi) Overlapping membership of the Executive, RHB and RPC is allowed.
  - vii) RHB terms of reference should be updated and Assembly ways of working adopted.
  - viii) All Board members should have the same voting status.
  - ix) Current working arrangements should continue with the Board supported by a technical project team drawn from the partner organisations.
  - x) A new team of three FTEs be established within the Assembly to lead the support work.
2. Following a vote it was agreed that the quorum for the Board should be set at one half of the Board membership.

## 8. South East Regional Housing Strategy 2006

The Director of Planning and Transport introduced the paper. During the discussion the point was raised that the Assembly should be giving the Government a strong message about sustainable design. Paul Martin thought this came across. The Director of Planning and Transport said he could include an extra tweak to the recommendations to Government, although this was actually covered in the report. Paul Martin **agreed** this.

The further point was made that infrastructure had not been included in Annex 2 of the report.

The Director of Planning and Transport agreed that it should be there and that it had not been brought out well enough in the list of recommendations. Again, it was **agreed** to adjust the wording.

The view was expressed that Social and Environmental Partners liked the emphasis given to the needs of less advantaged people and thought this strategy goes a long way to meeting them. The Director of Planning and Transport suggested that the submission be made to Government as it is, with the marker that the Assembly would wish to return to the subject next year.

Paul Martin thought that one of the advances of this strategy from the first one is that it tries to address the issue of prioritisation. Should more weighting have been given to affordability, for example; this is something that can be debated and is part of the learning process.

The Director of Planning and Transport advised the Committee that there has been a very substantial increase in Government funds to this region. The trend of decline has been effectively reversed and not just in growth areas, which only account for 15% of funding; the Government has recognised there are regional needs outside the growth areas.

A question was asked about the increased emphasis on social rented homes, when there is a desire to see a higher percentage of shared ownership.

The Director of Planning and Transport responded, saying that there is very strong support for social rented as well as shared ownership homes and he thought this document shows that.

Responding to concern about density requirements, the Director of Planning and Transport said the document does allow for variation, where appropriate; he maintained however that 40 dwellings per hectare can be an entirely satisfactory number in rural areas as well as urban areas.

Paul Martin commented that the question of density in rural areas is an important example of where the Assembly member stated that it would be inappropriate to apply the same number to the whole of the South East.

Responding to the comment that funding is not spread evenly, Paul Martin acknowledged that there is never sufficient funding, but it is not being allocated disproportionately to the growth areas.

Pam Alexander advised the Committee that the strategy will be discussed at SEEDA's Board meeting on 23 June and she believed it would receive support. The evidence base is essential to attracting resources and deliverability. Affordability for social housing and ownership have very different priorities.

### **Agreed**

That the Executive Committee, on behalf of the Assembly, endorsed the South East Regional Housing Strategy 2006 for submission to Government, subject to strengthening references to sustainable design and infrastructure.

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

The Chief Executive introduced the paper, drawing attention to the request for financial support received from the South East Social Inclusion Partnership (SIPSE).

## **Agreed**

1. The template for nominations to the Executive Committee and the Regional Planning Committee in the light of the outcome of the local elections in May.
2. To offer financial support of £25,000 to the South East Social Inclusion Partnership (SIPSE) for the current financial year only.

## **10. Financial Report**

The Director of Resources introduced the report. Responding to a request for a 'best guess' of the total VAT likely to be reclaimed, she advised the Committee that it would be more than £450k.

The Chief Executive said he would be bringing next year's budget to the Committee in October; that would be the time to consider the best deployment of these additional resources.

## **Agreed**

That the Committee note the report.

## **11. Nominations to Outside Bodies**

Mary Ballin confirmed that she was content to stand down from the Milton Keynes South Midlands Inter-regional Board.

Don Turner advised the Committee that although arrangements in respect of the Refugee and Asylum Seekers Consortium are still under review, a nomination is still required.

## **Agreed**

That nominations to the following outside bodies should be put to the annual meeting on 13 July 2005:

Tourism South East  
Milton Keynes South Midlands Inter-regional Board  
Refugee and Asylum Seekers Consortium

## **12. Notification of SEERA Ltd AGM on 16 September 2005**

The Committee **noted** that the AGM of SEERA Ltd will take place on 16 September 2005.

## **13. Regional Planning Committee on 13 June 2005 - Chairman's Report of the Meeting**

Keith Mitchell spoke to the paper. The Director of Planning and Transport advised the Committee that there was an error in point 3.6.1 in respect of Transport Policies - T4 should read T9. Responding to the query about the

availability of submissions from the Assembly's website, the Director of Planning and Transport advised the Committee that the papers for the next meeting of the Regional Planning Committee on 23 June will shortly be available from the website and will include these.

### **Agreed**

That the Executive receive the report.

## **14. Infrastructure and Implementation: Infrastructure Proposals**

The Director of Planning and Transport introduced the paper, commenting that the Committee may wish to allow time for further reflection before having a detailed debate. He thought the RDA might play a significant role in this.

In response to a query about funding for environmental infrastructure, the Director of Planning and Transport responded that although relatively small, resources are there.

Further comments were made that point 3.2, Ashford - Junction 20 should read Junction 10, and that development in many areas is incremental, therefore it is not clear how investment is triggered.

Responding, the Director of Planning and Transport drew the Committee's attention to point 4.10, which specifically brings out this very important point and is something he thought needs further exploration with Government. The RPC had a very brief discussion on the principle of a concordat, which shows how we can work together with the Government.

A question was asked about the funding shown against hospitals in Annex 4 which is negligible; is that amount to be allocated to each hospital or is it a total sum to be shared between them?

The Director of Planning and Transport pointed out that the report had been written by Roger, Tym & Partners, but it was his understanding that £20m has been allocated to acute hospitals in the growth areas. The Government is putting in a very substantial increase in hospitals. The time lag is important and is addressed in the report and recommendations. Growth areas are a relatively small part of a larger programme.

The view was expressed that the principle of a concordat was welcomed as a sign of a 'coming of age' of the negotiations between the Government and the Assembly.

## **Agreed**

Subject to detailed consideration by the RPC:

- i) That the Draft South East Plan incorporates specific policy reference to both the Implementation Plan and a package of infrastructure measures and mechanisms to improve infrastructure delivery, as recommended in this report.
- ii) That this package of proposals incorporates proposals in respect of revenue as well as capital investment.
- iii) That the Assembly propose to Government that a mutually binding concordat, attached in draft form to the report (Annex 4), forms the basis for an agreed way forward.
- iv) That the Assembly continues to refine its understanding of infrastructure and implementation issues in the period to submission of the Draft South East Plan to Government.
- v) That the Assembly commissions early and specific research on the utilities regulation issue, in order to pursue with Government improvements to present arrangements.
- vi) That early officer and member meetings with officials and Ministers be sought to discuss and refine these proposals.

## **15. Any Other Business**

- a) Crossrail - Hybrid Bill

The Chief Executive introduced the paper. Responding to the question about a more detailed report on the Assembly's case, he explained timing would not permit this but that officers would liaise with the relevant local authorities.

### **Agreed**

That the Committee agreed to lodge a petition against the Hybrid Bill for the Crossrail Project.

- b) SEEDA Board Committee - Sustainable Development, 8 June 2005

The report was received and **noted**.

- c) Water

Barry Clout asked:

“In the light of increased public concern over the sustainability of supply at current demand levels can the Assembly consider requesting the Environment Agency to lead on earlier implementation of

consumption level reduction with water companies and not in the heat of late summer?"

He pointed out that currently all reserve levels are below normal, many less than 50%, and that rainfall will have little effect on reserves.

The Director of Planning and Transport thought that the situation is being managed and watched on a daily basis, and that it is not the place of the Assembly to tell the Agency what to do in the short-term. However he suggested that if the Committee were so inclined members could ask the RPC to consider introducing into the South East Plan an advocacy statement to the effect that we should be moving to a statutory metering system in the long-term.

Barry Clout said he was requesting earlier communication, rather than waiting until a supply problem arose when it would be too late to have an impact. There is the question of sustainable quality of life for existing communities; water companies are giving mixed messages. Some of the problem may be about education rather than legislation.

The Chair then put the proposal to a vote; it was not supported.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.35 p.m.