

published 03.01.08

84

This Bulletin reports the main issues covered at:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	14.12.07
REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD	05.12.07
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE	28.11.07

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 14.12.07

MAKING THE CASE

A report highlighting the region's shortfall in affordable housing funding was launched at the meeting. [Making the Case](#) identifies the gap between the amount of affordable housing needed in the South East and funding Government has provided, showing an additional £400million during 2008-11 is required.

GOSE confirmed that the regional housing allocation will be £413m for 2008/09 and provisionally £463.5m for 2009/10 and £512.5m for 2010/11. Cllr Elizabeth Cartwright, chairman of the Regional Housing Board was "bitterly disappointed" by the figures.

GOSE has been asked to press Government to release the formula used for calculating funds for the regions.



Assembly Chairman Cllr Keith Mitchell (centre) cuts an affordable housing cake to show the gap in South East funding. Also pictured are Regional Housing Board Chairman Cllr Elizabeth Cartwright (left) and Regional Planning Committee Chairman Cllr Moira Gibson (right).

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Members were given an update on progress towards developing a [Regional Infrastructure Fund](#) (RIF).

The Assembly and SEEDA have been working on a RIF to allow the public sector to invest in infrastructure projects needed for growth. The RIF would forward fund infrastructure with costs being reclaimed from developers later. The aim is to have the infrastructure in place to unlock development land. The Executive discussed a governance framework for the RIF and is looking to SEEDA to identify a contribution towards establishing the fund, alongside contributions from the Regional Housing Board and the Regional Transport Board.

Ian Coates, GOSE's deputy regional director for strategy, confirmed that Government has not allowed a contribution to the RIF from regional housing allocations in 2008/09, although there could be a possibility of funds for 2009-11.

GOSE

Sub-National Review

Ian Coates told the meeting that consultation on the Sub-National Review (SNR) – which proposes assembly powers transfer to regional development agencies – had been delayed. Now expected early in 2008, the consultation parameters are likely to be expanded to include issues on the single regional strategy, governance and accountability.

The meeting also heard that the Director General at the Department of Communities and Local Government, Chris Wormald, had visited the South East to see some of the challenges the region faces.

[SIGN UP TODAY >>>>](#)

MEETING DATES

FULL ASSEMBLY	05.03.08	16.07.08	12.11.08
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	25.01.08	11.04.08	13.06.08
PLANNING COMMITTEE (RPC)	30.01.08	19.03.08	21.05.08
REGIONAL TRANSPORT BOARD (RTB)	24.01.08	24.04.08	10.07.08
REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD (RHB)	17.01.08	15.05.08	03.09.08

PAPER-FREE BULLETIN

BULLETIN has been re-designed to reduce the number of paper copies printed and encourage use of a pdf format. If you would like to receive Bulletin by email from this issue onwards, please let us know by emailing: secretariat@southeast-ra.gov.uk You can also view Bulletin online at: <http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/news/bulletins/2007/index.html>

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

Copies of the full papers for Assembly meetings, are available on the Assembly website: www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/meetings

Eco Towns

The Government's announcement on proposed locations of eco-towns is expected in February 2008. There was concern from the Assembly that local authorities are not involved in the process and some do not know if eco-town proposals have been submitted for their areas.

Passenger Champion

A consultation on the Local Transport Bill proposals for a '[Passenger Champion](#)' runs until 17 March 2008. The new champion would provide a more influential voice for bus passengers, who currently have no formal national representative.

Growth Points

Growth points in the South East will benefit from £105m of Government funding for infrastructure over the next three years. Nationally there is £732m for communities in England that have volunteered for housing growth. There is also an expectation that communities will be able to apply for a share of £200m from a national Community Infrastructure Fund.

NHS regional director

Professor John Newton has been appointed Regional Director of Public Health for South Central Strategic Health Authority. He will lead work to improve health and alleviate the causes of poor health.

SEEDA

Board Members

Pam Alexander, SEEDA Chief Executive, announced that SEEDA has two new board members - Dr Delores Byrne, managing director at QinetiQ, and Keith Riley, managing director at Veolia. They will replace deputy chairman Rob Douglas and Fiona Pollard.

Thames Gateway

SEEDA is working with the London and East of England development agencies to address the economic development of the Thames Gateway. Along with GOSE, the agencies will produce an investment plan to drive the economy of the area, expected in January 2008.

Business Support

Work has progressed on simplifying initiatives to ensure publicly funded business support is easier to access, offers value for money and impacts on public policy.

Corporate Plan

SEEDA's Corporate Plan consultation draft is expected in late January, the Executive will preview it at its January meeting. The Assembly's scrutiny select committee will examine the plan in February.

GLOBAL CHALLENGE

The Executive agreed to six recommendations for SEEDA to help improve the region's competitiveness with the rest of the world.

They recommended that SEEDA should:

- clarify how it will ensure its strategy and activities are forward-looking and flexible to deal with the opportunities and issues of the global economy
- establish an evidence base outlining the South East's significance to the national economy setting out the benefits of infrastructure investment in the region
- evaluate how to maximise the potential of universities individually and collectively in the region

- work with the development agencies in London and East of England to explore the potential for expanding individual programmes across regional boundaries
- further develop skills that help develop businesses' and individuals' ability to engage in a global market-place and work with partners to encourage language training
- further develop its support for small and medium enterprises with specific focus on making the most of opportunities in the global market-place.

SCRUTINY PROGRAMME

The Executive agreed to change this year's scrutiny programme to allow an Assembly scrutiny select committee to consider SEEDA's Corporate Plan.

It was also agreed that the programme for 2008-09 should focus on:

- Labour force and employment
- SEEDA and sub-regional partnerships - translating the Regional Economic Strategy into 'Place'
- SEEDA's coastal strategy, which has been moved from the current programme to allow for the Corporate Plan consideration.

HALF-YEAR FINANCIAL REPORT

The Executive noted the [half year report](#) on the Assembly's finances. Income to 30 September totals £2.6million, which is £35.6k higher than budget. Expenditure for the first half year totals £1.6m, which is £208.6k less than budget. A surplus of £43.2k is forecast at the year end.

LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL

A [presentation by the Learning and Skills Council](#) showed that although the South East as a whole is exceeding Government's education targets, there is wide variation when this is broken down into local authority areas.

There is a target to increase the number of apprenticeships being taken up between now and 2011.

Although there is £1.8billion over five years for further education capital projects in the South East, the LSC said there would need to be more investment in the region's education to cope with the rise in the 16 and 17 year old population.

HEALTH STRATEGY

A South East England [health strategy](#) has been endorsed by the Executive. The strategy, which the Assembly helped to develop, is aimed at all groups and organisations involved in people's health.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Reports from the following meetings were received by the Executive:

- [Joint Europe Committee, 7 November 2007](#)
- [Regional Planning Committee, 28 November 2007](#)
- [Regional Housing Board, 5 December 2007](#)

PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL

The RHB has agreed to recommend to Government an £80million programme to improve rundown housing in the private sector over three years. The money will be shared by nine [local authority partnerships](#) for 2008-11. Bids had to demonstrate how they would:

- Reduce the number of households struggling to heat their homes, because of insufficient or inefficient heating and insulation (this affects three quarters of the 150,000 private sector rundown homes)
- Reduce the number of people living in homes in disrepair without modern facilities
- Support regeneration
- Be innovative, for example using loans rather than grants to pay for renovations, so public sector investment can be re-used later.

If endorsed by Government, funds will be paid in stages every six months following the submission of scheme progress reports.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The RHB has asked for research into factors delaying the delivery of affordable housing in the region. The RHB also offered to support proposed Housing Corporation seminars to help local authorities work with developers to maximise affordable housing that is not publicly subsidised.

There was disappointment that Government had not responded to a letter from RHB Chairman Elizabeth Cartwright outlining the gap between the amount of affordable housing the region needs and Government's proposed funding allocations.

STRATEGIC HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

The RHB has agreed to work with the Improvement and Development Agency (IDEA) to agree common objectives on [housing improvement](#) work. IDEA runs a programme to support local authority councillors, officers and their partners deliver an enhanced strategic housing function.

The programme aims to:

- better equip local authorities to connect their housing, planning and economic development roles
- strengthen housing strategies through better incorporation into sustainable community strategies
- develop local authorities' skills to ensure local people are able to influence strategic housing outcomes
- develop local authorities' leadership and authority in local strategic partnerships.

GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITE FUNDING

The RHB agreed to advise Government to approve six bids for Gypsy and Traveller site refurbishments and five bids for additional pitches on existing sites costing a total of £1.8million.

BROWNFIELD LAND ASSEMBLY COMPANY

The RHB deferred a decision on a Brownfield Land Assembly Company until its January meeting when there will be further information on the project.

SUB-NATIONAL REVIEW (SNR)

Assembly staff briefed the Committee on work by officers to inform Government proposals for integrated regional strategies. These are expected to replace the regional spatial and economic strategies (RSS and RES) as part of Government's SNR proposals.

Assembly officers are working with Government and SEEDA to give their experience on the complexities of the current planning system and the importance of the Examination in Public (EiP).

There are concerns that Government's aspiration to streamline the RSS process could cut corners on parts of the process regarded as 'unnecessary bureaucracy' by Government and regional development agencies (RDAs), such as the EiP. Members were clear that any new system must not sacrifice democratic accountability.

Members agreed that officers should continue this work and give regular reports back to the Committee.

Tim Stansfeld, SEEDA head of planning and member of a national working group on the SNR, updated the Committee on the RDAs' position. He said that RDAs would be looking for a strategic 'light touch' in the integrated strategy, but that this did not mean cutting corners. RDAs would be looking to establish 'communities of interest' with local authorities.

Howard Ewing, GOSE deputy regional director for housing and planning, confirmed that consultation on the SNR proposals, due for December, would now happen in 2008.

GYPSY AND TRAVELLER CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee agreed the Assembly's approach to public consultation for the Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople partial review of the South East Plan.

Public consultation for the 'Issues and Options' stage of the Partial Review is scheduled to run for 12 weeks commencing 6 May 2008 and closing 29 July 2008.

The consultation will address:

- The number of permanent pitches required - ie is the total identified broadly correct?
- Distribution options, specified by number of pitches per district/unitary authority
- A more general statement of need for transit site provision
- Supporting policies including implementation.

Distribution options and policies for public consultation purposes are being developed. They will be debated by the Regional Planning Committee on 30 January 2008 and presented to the full Assembly meeting on 5 March 2008 for agreement.

The Assembly will lead the consultation process across the region, but it is important that the overall approach recognises and reflects the essential and significant contribution local authorities make to both the Partial Review process, and to delivering Government's objectives for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

A range of consultation techniques will be used, including:

- Regional press releases and media relations
- Public opinion polling
- Information Pack
- DVD

- Specialist Gypsy and Traveller consultation arrangements
- Regional key stakeholder workshops
- Local Consultation.

A total of £70,000 will be made available to support the delivery of local events by local authorities to support the consultation. A dedicated section of the South East Plan website will provide access to the Partial Review documentation and consultation resources. Hard copies will also be available.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The Committee also received updates on the following:

- a) London Plan: EiP Panel Report
- b) Further Proposed Changes to the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy
- c) Housing Completions 2006/7
- d) Development of River Basin Management Plan
- e) Thames Basin Heaths Interim Strategic Delivery Plan
- f) LDD Conformity - Statistics
- g) Major Planning Applications - Statistics
- h) National Housing and Planning Advice Unit.