

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY EXECUTIVE MEETING Wednesday, 14 July 2010



Present: Paul Carter (Chairman)
Paul Watkins (Secretary)
Mike Appleyard
Louise Bloom
Elizabeth Cartwright
Tony de Vere
Moirra Gibson
Ian Hudspeth
Gordon Keymer, CBE
Barry Norton
Tony Page
Andrew Povey
David Robertson
Cec Tallack

In Attendance: Simon Eden, LACE Group
Heather Bolton, Head of Communications & Public
Affairs, SEEC
Aidan Shutter, Policy Officer, SEEC
Irene Cripps, Partnership Board

Observers: Andrew Cumpsty, Reading BC
Roland Dibbs, Rushmoor BC
Ann Ducker, South Oxfordshire DC
Michael Gibbard, Cherwell DC
Carole Paternoster, Aylesbury Vale DC
Michael Snelling, Gravesham BC
Catriona Riddell, Director of Planning, Partnership Board

Ex1. Apologies, Declarations of Substitutes and Declarations of Interest

Ex1.1 Apologies were received from Mary Mears, Ed Turner, David Tutt and Chris Williams.

Ex1.2 Simon Eden substituted for Chris Williams.

Ex1.3 As George Beckett is no longer Leader of Winchester City Council Barry Norton of West Oxfordshire DC took his place on the Committee, for this meeting only.

Ex1.4 There were no declarations of interest.

Ex2. Minutes of SEEC Executive Meeting on 16 June 2010 and Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda

Ex2.1 The minutes were **agreed and signed** as a true record of the meeting.

Ex3. Future Capability at a South East-wide Level

Ex3.1 Paul Carter introduced the paper; points made during the following debate were:

- The hope that the proposals in the paper can be achieved despite the cuts in Government spending.
- The suggestion that rather than the Executive debating the proposals at this meeting, the Committee should wait for the debate to be held at the plenary meeting later that day.
- The suggestion that a middle course would be to wait and see what further changes the Government makes over the next six months before taking any further action.
- It was suggested that although the sceptics believe the South East will be 'done down', it would be better to have a watching brief to see what actually needs to be done as this would avoid setting up a unit which then has to be disbanded a short time later.
- Currently there is nothing between central Government and the individual local authorities; the South East needs to have a strong influence therefore the working group's proposals should be supported.
- Now is the time to influence central Government, while the 'doors are open', as this situation may change by this time next year; the next few months will be the time when the South East will have more influence than it has possibly had in the past.
- SEEC can alter the structure of the unit in the future should the need arise.
- The most important consideration is the outcomes; it was suggested that the proposals be supported in order that SEEC can move forward and look at how best to achieve the desired outcomes for the South East's residents.

Ex3.2 It was **agreed** that the Chairman would advise members at the AGM that the Executive supports the following recommendations, but that some members of the committee still have reservations:

- i) To agree to establish SEEC within a budget ceiling of £500,000 of local authority subscriptions and to the staffing levels outlined in section 4 of the report.
- ii) To undertake further work on the most appropriate member structures but to recommend that the SEEC plenary appoint lead spokesmen for the key areas of work identified in paragraph 4.4.

Ex4. South East England Councils' Position on the Future of GOSE

Ex4.1 The report was **noted**.

Ex5. South East England Councils' Constitution

Ex5.1 Paul Carter **advised** the Executive that lawyers had reviewed the new, adapted SEEC constitution to ensure it was fit for purpose, and put SEEC in a position to take ownership of any SEERA Ltd reserves.

Ex5.2 Paul Watkins **advised** the Executive that as a result there were some changes in respect of officer positions - the new post of Deputy Chairman and the post of Secretary is combined with that of Treasurer; additionally there was clarification in respect of nominations and substitutes, and withdrawal of membership.

Ex5.3 Responding to the question about where liabilities would lie in respect of staffing, Heather Bolton **advised** the Executive that there are two options:

- i) Staff could be hosted by one of the local authorities and some of the potential incoming reserves would have to be retained for pensions and redundancy liabilities.
- ii) One of the local authorities could enter into a partnership arrangement in which SEEC would have to buy a bond for pensions.

Ex5.4 Paul Carter **advised** the Executive that there would be an agreement with the hosting local authority that this arrangement would be cost neutral to that authority.

Ex5.5 The Executive **agreed** the changes to SEEC's constitution and **approved** the establishment of SEEC as an unincorporated association.

Ex6. South East England Councils' Business Plan

Ex6.1 Heather Bolton **emphasised** that this was only a draft but that it is important to show what can be done if the proposed unit is formed.

Ex6.2 Points made during the following discussion were:

- The draft was a good start.
- Monitoring is a large work area previously handled by several people; the unit should not expand or use consultants to cover this. There is a need to ensure that this is kept within budget and that a small unit can achieve these aims.
- The right resources and expertise will be available within the larger local authority 'family' but a different approach would be required.
- To review the business plan to include 'harder' outcomes.
- If the right people can be attracted, with the reserves there would be sufficient funding to hold an occasional conference, for example on housing, to put the case for the South East to Government.
- Masters' graduates could be used as interns for research projects.

Ex6.3 It was **agreed** to:

- i) Note the draft business plan and four high level objectives as a starting point, to be developed in more detail for a future Executive Committee meeting.
- ii) Keep the detail of the business plan and related action plan under review as the Government's policy agenda continues to develop.

Ex7. South East Strategic Partnership for Migration

Ex7.1 Roy Millard introduced his report and **reminded** members that he is 100% funded by the UK Border Agency. He **advised** members that outside London the South East receives the largest number of immigrants.

Ex7.2 He **agreed** to regularly provide SEEC with a monitoring report on inward migration; the first report would cover the effects on schools, hospitals, etc. over the last five to six years.

Ex8. South East England Councils' Approach to the Spending Review

Ex8.1 The content of Chris Williams' report on the recommended approach to the Government's Spending Review was noted and the recommendations were **agreed**:

- i) That a short, focused contribution should be made to the Spending Review (SR) before the end of July 2010.

- ii) That key points from the following papers on transport, housing and economy and skills should form the basis on SEEC's SR contribution, focusing on South East funding needs and the how this spending will benefit the UK as a whole.
- iii) That any additional key points that should be added to SEEC's SR contribution be agreed.
- iv) That the Chairman and Vice-Chairmen be delegated to agree the final SEEC contribution on behalf of members in order to meet SR deadlines.

a) Transport priorities, including report back from Transport Board

Ex8.2 David Robertson introduced his report, commenting that since it had been written he had received a letter from Network Rail saying how useful it had been having a single point of contact, and that this is also the view of the Highways Agency; also Greg Clark had attended the last meeting of the Board, not in his ministerial capacity but as an MP, and had noted the usefulness of the Board in achieving objectives, including his own. He also commented that London will have an even greater impact than it already has on other authorities.

Ex8.3 Responding to the comment that the Transport Board had been an improvement on what had gone before, he said that to maintain this influence on transport issues SEEC would need to adopt the member working group's recommendation in respect of SEEC's future capability.

Ex8.4 The report was **received and noted**.

b) Housing affordability, including report back from Housing & Regeneration Board

Ex8.5 Elizabeth Cartwright introduced her report, **advising** members that the second word in the second line of 2.3 should read without.

Ex8.6 The report was **received and noted**.

c) Economy and skills, including report back from Economic Development & Skills Board

Ex8.7 Mike Appleyard introduced his report, the content of which was **noted**.

Ex8.8 Paul Carter **informed** members that a final meeting of the Board of the Partnership Board had been held, at which Rob Douglas had confirmed SEEDA's wish to hand over assets and give as much assistance as possible to its successors, such as LEPs, as it also wound down. Meetings will be convened as appropriate to facilitate the handover.

Ex8.9 Heather Bolton **advised** members that she would like to receive any additional items members wished to have included in SEEC's contribution to the Spending Review.

Ex9. Confirmed Forward Meeting Dates (all to be held at a central London venue):

Ex9.1 Paul Carter said that there is a lot to be done once the size and funding level of SEEC's secretariat had been agreed; the members **noted** the following dates:

Wednesday, 15 September 2010

Friday, 15 October 2010

Tuesday, 7 December 2010

Thursday, 27 January 2011

Friday, 18 February 2011

Ex10. Any Other Business

Ex10.1 Paul Carter **advised** members that, at its meeting the previous week, the LGA had agreed to amend its constitution to allow an additional member to be elected to its Executive. There will now be nine regional representatives on the LGA Group Executive and therefore nominations to that group will be sought in SEEC's AGM party group pre-meets later that day.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 11.12.