

AGENDA ITEM 9

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS PLENARY MEETING

Date: 25th March 2010

Subject: **Outcomes from the Leaders' Board Consultation**

Report by: Paul Watkins, SEEC Secretary

Purpose of the Paper

1. To update SEEC Members on the outcomes of the recent Consultation on interim Leaders Board arrangements.

The Consultation Process

2. On 25th November 2009, The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 (Commencement No 1) Order was published which required existing Leaders' Boards to carry out consultation on their interim operating arrangements.
3. As advised by GOSE, the consultation on the South East England Leaders Board (SEELB) was open for five weeks from 27th January to 3rd March 2010. Consultation details were available on both the SEEC and Partnership Board websites and links to these were also sent to all local authorities, key organisations and stakeholders.

Outcomes of the Consultation

4. Following the close of the consultation, 10 formal responses had been received on behalf of the following organisations:
 - Brighton and Hove City Council
 - East Sussex County Council
 - Portsmouth City Council
 - West Sussex County Council
 - Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH)
 - Reading Borough Council
 - Eastbourne Borough Council
 - East Kent local authorities – joint response (Canterbury, Dover, Shepway and Thanet)
 - Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)
 - South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)

Since the closing date, three additional responses have been received from:

- South Downs National Park Authority
 - Oxfordshire County Council
 - South East Coast Strategic Health Authority
- .
5. SEEC wishes to thank all those who responded to the consultation and a brief summary of all responses is included in Appendix A to this report. From the responses, there was clear support for the current Leaders' Board scheme. This being the case, I submitted the SEELB scheme to GOSE on 5th March unchanged from the consultation version. My letter to GOSE is also attached as Appendix B.
 6. As you will see from the responses, the Consultation raised a number of points of detail. As I said in my letter to GOSE, whilst we were not proposing any changes, we will continue to keep the SEELB 'scheme' under review to ensure it remains fit for purpose and reflects the needs of SEEC member authorities.
 7. However, last week, CLG did request that the scheme include clarification of the Leaders' Board relationship with SEERA Ltd particularly because it is the accountable body for the purposes of any grant paid under section 71(7) of the LDEDC Act. Therefore additional explanation has been included in the scheme as set out in Appendix B.

Recommendation

8. **The Plenary is asked to note the report and the action taken to respond to GOSE.**

Paul Watkins
SEEC Secretary

Summary of Responses to SEELB Consultation

Organisation	Summary of Response
Brighton and Hove Borough Council	Support proposals
East Sussex County Council	Proposals are appropriate and fit for purpose. Scheme is well established in the region. Council supports the realignment of Partnership Board staff to the Leaders Board but expresses concern about potential pension liabilities (as the staff are part of East Sussex Pension Scheme).
Portsmouth City Council	Raised concern that the Leaders' Board does not comply with the LGA protocol on proportionality.
West Sussex County Council	Supports the amended arrangements for the Board
Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH)	Support proposals
Reading Borough Council	Scheme successfully addresses challenge of ensuring representation across a large region like the South East. Support the key role afforded to local authorities putting them at the heart of strategic planning and decision making across the region. Good Partnership working needs to continue with critical stakeholder groups particularly the SE Diamonds for Investment and Growth.
Eastbourne Borough Council	Support proposals
East Kent Local Authorities	When judged against the Consultation guidance questions, the proposals are significantly robust and fit for purpose to justify continuation in their present form. Also support the Leaders Board involvement in other Regional Boards which is sufficient in size and balance to be efficient and retain the authority to speak on behalf of all local government in the region. The East Kent Local Authorities believe the arrangements can demonstrate wide ranging support across local government and the wider public sector for the way it is structured, its representative basis and how it conducts business.

The Federation of Small Businesses	Concerned that within the current SEEC organisational model there is effectively no voice or representation for the small business sector. (this comment refers to the wider SEEC organisation, not specifically the Leaders' Board)
South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)	Commented that SEEDA and the Leaders Board have quickly established an effective working arrangement which is allowing the partnership to respond quickly and effectively to the challenging circumstances facing the South East particularly the initial work to develop the new Regional Strategy. Believes the current 'scheme' satisfies the three broad criteria laid down by the Government for a Leaders' Board. Encourages the Leaders' Board to continue to engage stakeholders as part of developing the new Regional Strategy.
South Downs National Park Authority	SDNPA officially comes into being on 1 st April 2010 and as a new organisation are keen to engage regionally, particularly as the new Regional Strategy develops. Note that a member from the New Forest National Park will currently take the place on the Leaders Board but SDNPA are keen to engage fully with SEEC.
Oxfordshire County Council	Endorsed the Leaders Board Scheme as proposed. Current arrangements represent a major improvement over previous regional arrangements by ensuring local government is a key player in the development of regional policy. No amendments suggested and supported
South East Coast Strategic Health Authority	Arrangements seem reasonably streamlined in line with CLG Guidance. Comments raised about how the authorities not directly represented at the Leaders' Board are able to fully contribute, how councils locally engage their stakeholders to inform the decision making process and how the 8 SEELB members represent views at the Strategy and Partnership Boards. Also commented about how wider stakeholders could develop relations with and engage in the work of the Leaders' Board

Appendix B



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5th March 2010

Dear Colin

South East England Councils Leaders Board (SEELB) Outcomes from the Consultation Exercise

As you are aware, consultation on the SEELB interim arrangements concluded on Wednesday 3rd March. During this time, consultation details were available on both the SEEC and Partnership Board websites and links to these were also sent to all local authorities, key organisations and stakeholders.

By the consultation closing date, 10 responses had been received. Most responses expressed support for the Leaders' Board Scheme as detailed so I am not proposing any changes at this stage. A final version of the SEELB Scheme is attached for your information. I will be making a more detailed report on the outcomes from the consultation exercise to the next SEEC Plenary meeting on 25th March.

We will, of course, continue to keep the SEELB 'scheme' under review to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

Yours sincerely


Paul Watkins
SEEC Secretary

South East England Councils

South East England Leaders' Board Scheme

Submitted to GOSE on 5th March 2010 following a consultation exercise as required by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009



Following consultation, the South East England Leaders Board (SEELB) has adopted the following 'scheme' of operation.

The 'Scheme'

- a) The South East England Leaders' Board (SEELB) is the executive body of South East England Councils (SEEC). It comprises political representation from 22 of the 74 councils across the region including unitaries, county and district and borough councils. SEELB plays a significant role in developing and implementing the single Regional Strategy in partnership with SEEDA and the Partnership Board Strategy Unit. The aim of SEEC is to be the 'democratic voice' of South East England.
- b) The SEELB reflects the political balance across the South East region (based on local council elections) and by authority type. The Board is chaired by Paul Carter (Conservative) and there are two vice-chairmen – Louise Bloom (Liberal Democrat) and Tony Page (Labour). There are also places on SEELB for the chairmen of the Regional Housing Board, the Regional Transport Board and the Planning Panel. They advise SEELB on matters relating to strategic planning, housing and transport for the region and will work with all SEEC member councils, government agencies, neighbouring regions, developers, companies and other interests as appropriate. No individual group or political party shall be eligible for membership of SEELB until gaining a 5% threshold of councillors in the region.
- c) If required, voting at SEELB meetings is on the basis of one member, one vote. The chairman has a casting vote. The quorum for meetings of SEELB is one third of the Board membership.
- d) SEELB is represented by eight members who sit on the South East England Partnership Board, chaired by SEEDA. Eight members of SEELB also sit on the South East England Strategy Board, including the chairman. Full details of the current regional structural arrangements are attached as Appendix A.
- e) As its executive body, SEELB conducts the business of South East England Councils (SEEC) on its behalf. Except for appointing SEEC representatives to outside bodies and giving SEEC's final approval to the single Regional

Strategy or equivalent, all matters are delegated to SEELB for decision. SEELB will be held to account by reporting back to full plenary meetings of SEEC on issues considered, decisions made and actions taken.

- f) Each party group's nominations to SEELB must include the Chairman of SEEC, who will also chair SEELB, and the two Vice-Chairmen.
- g) SEELB may establish additional standing or time-limited boards, committees and working groups as considered necessary. Any elected member of any member authority of SEEC may be nominated to sit on a board, committee or working group of SEEC. SEELB may make such arrangements as appropriate for officer support to the Forum.
- h) SEELB meets around six times per year in central London venues. All agendas and associated papers and minutes are publically available and the meetings are also open to the public. SEELB is already operating effectively across the region and its role and influence is continually expanding.
- i) The Partnership Board Strategy Unit team (former Assembly staff) will become directly accountable to SEELB. With SEELB responsible for the CLG funding in 2010-11, they are also responsible for ensuring delivery of the business plan which will be agreed by CLG in March 2010. Ensuring that SEERA Ltd staff work to SEELB, rather than the Partnership Board, gives a clearer line of accountability under this new funding arrangement for the South East.
- j) One representative of the region's National Parks will become a member of SEELB from 1 April 2010. (Note: during the interim period, one National Parks representative has been a member of the South East England Partnership Board whilst this Board has been designated as the Regional Planning Body)

Partnership Working

Through operating the interim arrangements, SEELB has developed effective partnership working arrangements with SEEDA. Working arrangements with SEELB are detailed in the Terms of Reference of both the Partnership Board and the Strategy Board. Experience to date has shown partnership arrangements to be robust and effective. If the situation arises, any potential areas for conflict will initially be discussed between the chairman of the Partnership Board (SEEDA) and the SEELB Chairman.

The Leaders Board will continue to engage with stakeholders in the development of the regional strategy at both the Member and technical level. Details of the approach to stakeholder engagement are set out in the document - 'Shaping the South East Strategy: Engaging our Communities and Stakeholders – which accompanied the Regional Strategy Project Plan.

SEERA Ltd

SEERA Ltd is a company limited by guarantee whose members are wholly drawn from local authorities in the South East. Membership is open to all authorities who are members of South East England Councils (SEEC). SEERA Ltd is the accountable body for the South East Leaders Board and SEEC for the purposes of any grant paid under section 71(7) of the Local Democracy, Economic development and Construction Act 2009.