

SEEC AGM
Wednesday 15 July 2009, Surrey County Council
Attendees (list attached)

The Leader of Surrey County Council, Andrew Povey, welcomed the attendees.

Nomination to Boards

1. SEEC Executive/Leaders' Board
 - Paul Carter (Kent, Con) was nominated Chairman and elected by a show of hands.
 - Tony Page (Lab) and Louise Bloom (Lib Dem) were elected vice-chairmen.
 - Cllr David Tutt was co-opted onto the Leaders' Board.

2. Full Committee membership is detailed in the attached document.

These appointments were agreed for a year until the next AGM. It was agreed this year to hold the AGM after the County elections, which were delayed by one month to coincide with the European elections. It was agreed to hold the 2010 AGM in the earlier part of July if possible, but agreed that flexibility on the date for AGMs would be needed to reflect county/unitary/district election dates.

Cllr Paul Watkins was thanked by the Chairman for overseeing the secretarial arrangements of SEEC.

Diana Pogson (Managing Director, South East England Partnership Board) was thanked by the Chairman for her work to bring SEEDA and SEEC together on the Partnership Board.

It was agreed that Local Authority Chief Executives be permitted to attend future meetings.

Chairman's Report (Paul Carter)

1. Sub-national Review: the initial review indicated that SEEDA would achieve significant empowerment, but since then councils across the South East had played a significant role in achieving devolution to a more local level.
2. SEERA Ltd: Members of SEEC will be invited to become Members of SEERA Ltd by making a £1 contribution. It was proposed to change the name to SEEC Ltd at the SEERA Ltd AGM on 16 October.
3. Forward look: SEEC can have a really strong voice as a single platform for councils in the South East and as such could play a major role in influencing the next government especially on devolution. Mr Carter mentioned that he was working with the Local Government Association to devise models of devolution to unitaries, counties and the districts. SEEC needs to determine its vision on transport, housing, planning and education and skills to ensure that the current or new government did not impose its own blueprint on local government.
4. A new relationship between SEEC, LGA and the English Regions Network was needed. The Chairman and Cllr Paul Watkins had met with Margaret Eaton and David Shakespeare to achieve adequate representation from the South East on the LGA Board. Increased representation to include all eight regions on the LGA Board was also required.

Diana Pogson's (the interim Chief Executive of the South East England Partnership) report

- *The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill* named two responsible authorities for delivering the Single Regional Strategy - SEEDA and the Leaders' Board, which came together in the Partnership Board (PB). 4 members from SEEDA's Board of 15 and 8 members from the Leaders' Board of 22 were on the PB. The PB is chaired by the Chairman of SEEDA and signed off the Single Regional Strategy. It would meet twice a year in public and would reach decisions by consensus. A representative from the National Parks and one additional SEEDA member would also be in place until the Bill had been passed, then the 8/4 ratio would be in place.
- The Strategy Board (SB) is chaired by Paul Carter with an 8/4 membership ratio from the Leaders' Board/SEEDA. Decisions would be reached by consensus and the SB would meet in public 4/6 times a year. The bulk of the work for the Single Regional Strategy would be done via the SB, ensuring high level steering of strategy to provide a framework for sustainable economic development. It was responsible for integrating investment priorities taking advice from the various bodies and seeking alignment between strategy and delivery. Observers would include 4 delivery partners along the lines of Homes and Communities Agency, Learning and Skills Council, Environment Agency – although which ones to be determined. The SB would include two stakeholder observers from the Stakeholder Liaison Group. The stakeholders would play a role on the Delivery Boards and working groups and formation of the Regional Strategy.
- DP stated that she was chairing the Working Group that oversaw the Delivery Boards. It was believed that the Regional Transport Board has worked very well and was seen as a good model of governance, thus the Terms of Reference required little change. It was agreed however to increase the number of local authority members to 7 on the RTB and 8 on the Regional Housing and Regeneration Board. The Economic Development and Skills Board would replace a number of SEEDA Boards including the RES Steering Group.
- The Chairmen of the Delivery Boards will automatically be members of the Strategy Board. The Planning Panel will act in an advisory capacity to the Strategy Board.
- The Executive Steering Group includes Chris Williams representing LACE, Diana Pogson, Tim Stansfield, Martin Tugwell and Pam Alexander for SEEDA. It meets on a monthly basis to link the Strategy Unit staff, Strategy Board and Partnership Board.
- SEERA Ltd will continue to support the Leaders' Board, working groups and Boards. It will not provide officer support for SEEC.
- SEERA Ltd has DCLG funding for the planning component of the Single Regional Strategy.

Questions:

- Paul Carter asked for clarification on communicating the various activities of the Partnership Board/Delivery Boards. There was an essential need to ensure that all 74 leaders and councils were kept informed and to know what was happening on the Boards. Most members of SEERA had not felt they were well informed; SEEC members must be kept advised of developments. Stakeholders should only be involved when they had a valuable contribution to make and this needed to be endorsed by the Leaders' Board. That discussion had yet to be finalised.

- Paul Carter stated his understanding was that recommendations emanating from the South East Plan went to the Strategy Unit first before going to Government. He asked for clarification on this point.
- It was agreed that clarification should be sought on the decisions that would go from the Delivery Boards to the Strategy Board then Government and those that went from the Delivery Boards to Government.
- Martin Tugwell stated that the Delivery Boards advised and identified investment priorities within the framework of the South East Plan (SEP) and would advise Government on the investment priorities for the SEP. The Regional Transport and Housing and Regeneration Boards referred to the South East Plan and took advice on what the investment priorities are. This inputted into the Regional Funding Advice and the Partnership Board who would decide what recommendations went to Government.

ACTION POINTS:

- Need to communicate the activities of the Delivery Boards to SEEC (Jenny Whittle to undertake as Communications Manager; Delivery Board Chairmen to provide verbal updates to the Strategy Board and SEEC Executive).
- Need to look at all the items on the Forward Plan for the various Delivery Boards that are coming up over the next 12 months (*Leaders' Board*).
- Leaders' Board to meet by the end of July to debate the Terms of Reference for the Delivery Boards before they were ratified by the Partnership Board. All 22 Members of the Leaders' Board to attend the meeting or send substitutes (*Paul Watkins to arrange*).

SEERA Ltd

- DP outlined that the name of SEERA Ltd be changed to SEEC Ltd at the AGM in October. Membership would be opened up to all 74 authorities at a cost of £1 each. SEERA Ltd would email details on membership to all 74 councils.
- Paul Carter stated that it was important to look at future proofing, linked with a culling of quangos and how we could potentially have a regional entity with an intent and purpose, e.g. to have strategic spatial planning powers, working in conjunction with the Greater London Assembly and organisations representing other parts of the country that bordered the South East region.
- It was agreed that the next Leaders' Board meeting needed to discuss how the 74 Councils would coalesce under a Conservative Government.
- A letter of proposed changes from SEERA Ltd to SEEC Ltd be sent to Leaders and Chief Executives so Councils can check the legal position (*Action: DP*).

The Relationship with the LGA

With Richard Kemp and Marianne Abley

Richard Kemp posed the following benefits of close LGA-South East partnership: sharing information in a cost-effective way, networking and campaigning together on the big issues.

Paul Carter stated that the LGA's perception of the "Big Issues" were often at odds with those identified by authorities across the region. How can SEEC and the LGA work together to develop a shared plan to bring quango functions and expenditure under local democratic control? How do we effectively lobby the LGA as the voice of the South East?

Ms Abley advised that LGA members had stated that they wanted to take functions from bodies covering the following: Education and Skills; Regional Development Agencies; Housing; and Strategic Health Authorities where this is no democratic control; transport and climate change.

Paul Carter stated that SEEC had to persuade the next Government that the functions currently undertaken by quangos could be better delivered by local government.

John Furey argued that the big issue is in fact economic development which underpins all the issues mentioned.

ACTION:

- Write to the LGA Chairman, Margaret Eaton, stating that SEEC is unhappy about a North West representative from the LGA apparently being imposed upon SEEC and that the South East should have a position on the LGA Executive as well as the other English regions.

South East RIEP/Improvement and Efficiency South East

- Paul Bettison led on this item. The RIEP name had been changed to IESE (Improvement and Efficiency South East). A paper will be taken to the next IESE Board meeting so members are appointed from their councils on a themed/geographical basis.
- In the first year of performance, IESE had achieved £18.5m cashable savings and believe could achieve cashable savings of £45m next years on the basis of two councils merging their back office costs and supporting county-district partnerships across 63 councils with a 9% saving on placements for those with learning difficulties.
- Paul Carter and Paul Bettison had spoken about representation on IESE and PC asked for better communication on the activities of IESE.

SEEC Business Plan *(led by Chris Williams, Chief Executive of Buckinghamshire County Council)*

- CW identified Migration and the London Olympics 2012 as the two key issues for the region.
- State of the Region Report, health and wellbeing, crime and disorder other issues for discussion. The Partnership Board had identified six priorities on which the Strategy Board would hold workshops. These include: climate change, impact of the recession, funding for infrastructure, housing which will form the back drop to the Delivery Boards and Regional Single Strategy.
- A website was also in the process of being designed.
- SEEC to be supported by "light touch" officer support from across the region. Local Authority Chief Executives (LACE) to assist working groups.
- Leaders' Board need to identify priorities to take forward for further work including devolution from the regional tier to sub-regional level.
- Suggested that scrutiny of GOSE be added to scrutiny of SEEDA which was currently taking place via the Regional Select Committee.

Catriona Riddell, Director of Planning at the Partnership Board

- Six legal challenges to the SEP in train.

- The Partnership Board planners were working closely with local planners to prepare Local Development Frameworks (LDFs)
- Examination in Public on Aggregates due to start in October 2009
- Examination in Public on Gypsy and Traveller sites due to start in February 2010
- Agreed that job creation must be the top priority for SEEC and must be the headline commitment in the Regional Spatial Strategy. The Chairman stated that it was up to SEEC to shape the key priorities in the RSS, working with SEEDA.

Verbal updates provided by the Delivery Board Chairmen and officers

Regional Housing and Regeneration Board (Elizabeth Cartwright - EC)

- RHB (now RHRB) met on 24 June and discussed the South East Plan. The target for delivering affordable housing is 11,600. There is still a shortfall of 2000 affordable homes because of lack of funding. New home starts down by 73%; the picture is particularly bleak in rural areas, but some local authorities have provided land and/or services to enable development to proceed. Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) will have a funding shortfall of some £600m nationally if the Retail Price Index (RPI) falls below zero. EC to write to the Local Government Minister, John Hutton, about these issues.
- The RHB will gather data to assess the impact of an aging population on housing needs.
- Items to be discussed at the September meeting include quarterly report from the HCA on delivery; Gypsy and Traveller site consultation; private sector housing renewal.
- Workshop to take place on defining priorities for the coming year including the delivery of housing in rural areas.
- Board has raised the unfairness of the Housing Revenue Account system; Government is considering relaxing the rules so councils can build homes and retain the income they receive from it. Wokingham BC stated they wanted to build homes outside the HRA and EC promised to look into this.
- Attention drawn to a recent Daily Telegraph article that stated 2.5m homes are to be built without gardens; agreed that a commitment is needed to refuse to build in back gardens.

Regional Transport Board (update given by Martin Tugwell)

- Government response expected imminently on the Regional Funding Advice submission
- RTB get a quarterly monitoring report of all schemes in the programme
- The Draft Sustainable Transport Strategy (DaSTS) update to go to the Partnership Board on 24 July

The SEEC Chairman ended the day by stating that SEEC would host two half-day seminars on housing and transport plans with a key speaker (NB: Housing seminar will take place on 5 March and the Partnership Board have held transport workshops over Autumn 2009).

END OF MEETING