

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEETING

Tuesday, 7 December 2010

**Royal Institute of British Architecture (RIBA)
66, Portland Place, London, W1B 1AD**



Present: Paul Carter (SEEC Chairman)
Paul Watkins (SEEC Secretary/Treasurer)
Louise Bloom
Andrew Bowles
Gillian Brown
Elizabeth Cartwright
Andrew Cumpsty
Tony de Vere
Ann Ducker
Lynne Hack
Cec Tallack
Ken Thornber, CBE
Melinda Tilley

In Attendance: Chris Williams, Chairman of the LACE Group
Heather Bolton, Head of Communications & Public Affairs, SEEC
Aidan Shutter, Policy Officer, SEEC
Roy Millard, South East Strategic Partnership for Migration
Hayley Austin, Office & Administration Co-ordinator, SEEC
Oona Muirhead, SEEDA
Ivan Perkovic, SEEDA

1. Apologies, Declarations of Substitutes and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mike Appleyard, Moira Gibson, Gordon Keymer, Andrew Povey, David Robertson and James Swindlehurst.
- 1.2 Gillian Brown substituted for Myles Cullen, Melinda Tilley substituted for Ian Hudspeth and Ann Ducker substituted for Barry Norton. Oona Muirhead substituted for Pam Alexander from SEEDA.
- 1.3 There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of SEEC Executive Member Workshop on 15 October 2010 and Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda

- 2.1 The minutes were **agreed and signed** as a true record of the meeting.

3. South East dashboard and evidence base

a) LEP update and review of economic data/SEEDA intellectual property

- 3.1 Oona Muirhead advised the Executive that six Local Enterprise Partnership (LEPs) bids from the South East had been successful in the first round of applications. However, others had not been successful initially.
- 3.2 She also advised that feedback received so far suggested business engagement was proving difficult in some cases. The date for the first round of bids to the £1.4 billion Regional Growth Fund (RGF) closes on 21 January 2011. Oona also explained that SEEDA officers were available to help with LEP development and RGF technical advice. So far, 12 officers were 'on loan' to SE organisations. Chris Williams asked if there could be a SEEDA secondment to SEEC and support for a planned officer group of economic analysts? Oona said staff could be loaned at no cost to SEEC and Heather Bolton said this could provide helpful support to the Economic Dashboard Task and Finish Group.
Post meeting note: Local authority requests for support from SEEDA staff should be emailed to jennylester@seeda.org.uk and oonamuirhead@seeda.co.uk
- 3.3 Chris Williams warned that messages from Ministers seemed to be suggesting that it would be very unlikely that RGF bids from the SE would be successful, a view supported by Ken Thornber. Oona added that the Government would want RGF bids that were ready to go, so her advice was to be selective in what goes forward.
- 3.4 Paul Carter said that data shows that there are more people in poverty in parts East Sussex and Kent than in the North. He also said that SEEC Officers should work with SEEDA to ensure the most accurate and up-to-date data is accessed and available. Andrew Bowles suggested site visits to areas like Thanet.
- 3.5 Chris Williams said it would be key to influence the perception of both Lord Heseltine and Ian Wrigglesworth who will be Chair and Deputy Chair of the RGF Independent Approval Panel and others taking key decisions. It would also be important to look at how business across the South East could be best supported. It was agreed that Oona Muirhead would provide a list of key contact names.
- 3.6 Ivan Perkovic gave an overview of SEEDA's current economic data work, saying that analysis of critical data is important to make the case to Government for funding or policy changes. Referring to para 2.3 of SEEDA's report, Ken Thornber asked if the budget of £200,000 is available until SEEDA is dissolved, Oona Muirhead advised that the money was for the current year and that next year's budget had not yet been set.

- 3.7 In terms of RDA assets, Oona said that the process is driven by Government and the RDAs are putting together an asset and liability plan for submission to BIS by the end of January 2011. SEEDA assets may go up for sale however many have significant liabilities. SEEDA is pressing for the balance to be retained locally. Oona added that BIS may establish six local teams across the country but that they would have very limited capacity.

b) Draft dashboard statistics on migration in the South East

- 3.8 Roy Millard, introduced his paper which included suggested migration indicators covering Health, Labour, Education and Asylum. Roy explained that net migration had stayed stable and immigration had declined compared with previous years. The Executive noted the recent decline in the number of National Insurance Number (NINO) registrations but believed it would be useful to compare with the number of people actually working in the country. Paul Carter asked if NINOs deregistered? Roy agreed to find out and report back.
- 3.9 Andrew Cumpsty said it was important to get this current data into Government as significant changes have occurred since the last census. As data changes relatively quickly it was agreed that SEEC should receive a report at six monthly intervals. It was also suggested that more authorities should be represented on the SESPM Board.

c) Input to LGA

- 3.10 Aidan Shutter introduced his report which set out the key issues in relation to deprivation and public sector employment across the South East. Paul Carter advised that the paper should be linked with the fair funding work to provide a robust case for the South East against well funded areas like London.
- 3.11 Ivan Perkovic advised that there is to be an update of SEEDA's report on the impact of public sector redundancies (first produced in August) to reflect changes regionally and nationally. Paul Carter said that the differences between London and the South East were dramatic and in practice we have the next nine months to make the case for the South East.
- 3.12 Chris Williams advised that SEEC should work closely with SEEDA to produce an updated paper and for this to be submitted to the LGA's David Parsons and other opinion formers by the end of January to help make the case for investment and funding for the South East.

d) Joint work with SESL on fair funding evidence base

- 3.13 Heather Bolton advised the SESL report would focus on the Return on Investment offered by the South East, whilst SEEC would examine per capita funding and fairness in local government finance. It was agreed that the report would be commissioned and prepared over the next three months to ensure the fair-funding argument is adequately made.

It was expected that the commission would cost a significant amount. Heather Bolton would finalise the terms of reference for the commission.

4. Update on local Government finance settlement (verbal)

- 4.1 It was noted that the settlement has been delayed until after the meeting date.

5. SEEC input on Government proposals

- 5.1 a) Housing Revenue Account – Heather Bolton explained that this very technical consultation affected 32 authorities across the South East with landlord responsibilities and that the submissions need to be made by 16 December 2010. Elizabeth Cartwright advised that a high level SEEC response should be made on the principles behind the allocation of funds. A further response would also be needed later on the localism Bill aspects of housing. She also questioned the legality of the proposals for Right to Buy receipts. .
- 5.2 b) Business Rates and TIF – It was noted that the response had been agreed by the Chairman and submitted by the closing date.

6. SEEC task & finish group membership

- 6.1 Membership of the T&F groups was being finalised and dates for first meetings in Jan/Feb were being sought.

7. SEEC subscriptions and budget 2011-12

- 7.1 Paul Carter advised that the SEERA Ltd liquidators are due to pay SEEC money in early January. He asked Heather Bolton to chase for an update on progress.
- 7.2 Chris Williams advised that non recognition of SEEC for VAT registration could add an additional 20% to costs. He advised that Diana Pogson is aiming to clarify the VAT registration issue.
- 7.3 The Executive agreed that subscription levels for next year should be frozen at this year's rates.

8. Confirmed Forward Meeting Dates:

- 8.1 It was **agreed** that the next meeting of the Executive would be held on the morning of 18 February 2011. An Executive meeting scheduled for 27 January 2011 had now been cancelled. Members also **noted** that the Housing Conference would take place in the first half of February 2011.

Post meeting note: the SEEC housing conference is now set for Tuesday 15 February 2011.

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1 Chris Williams raised concerns about a gap at the regional level for discussions with Government on transport issues. Whilst new LEPs could have individual conversations, not all areas would be covered. Members generally agreed it would be useful to have a voice at the regional level as well as through the LEPs.
- 9.2 It was agreed that Chris Williams approach DfT to open up a dialogue about future arrangements for all transport related issues.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.45pm

Signed: _____

Paul Carter
Chairman

Date: 18 February 2011