

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND LEADERS BOARD-SEEC EXECUTIVE**MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 16 OCTOBER 2009**

Present: Paul Carter (Chairman)
 Paul Watkins (Secretary)
 Mike Appleyard
 George Beckett
 Louise Bloom
 Elizabeth Cartwright
 Myles Cullen
 Tony de Vere
 Moira Gibson
 Ian Hudspeth
 Gordon Keymer, CBE
 Andrew Povey
 Tony Reid
 Cec Tallack
 Ken Thornber, CBE

In Attendance: Chris Williams, Chairman of the LACE Group
 Aidan Shutter, Policy Officer, SEEC
 Jenny Whittle, Communications Manager, SEEC
 Diana Pogson, Interim Managing Director, Partnership Board
 Strategy Unit
 Catriona Riddell, Director of Planning, Partnership Board
 Strategy Unit
 Irene Cripps, PA to Diana Pogson, Partnership Board
 Strategy Unit
 Mary Blanche, Acting Regional Partnership Manager, SESPM
 Howard Ewing, Deputy Regional Director, GOSE (for Section
 A items only)
 Pam Alexander, Chief Executive, SEEDA (for Section A items
 only)

A. SEE Leaders' Board (SEELB)**A1. Apologies and Declarations of Substitutes**

A1.1 Apologies were received from Mary Ballin, John Furey, Mary Mears, Tony Page, David Robertson, Henry Smith, Ed Turner and David Tutt.

A1.2 Myles Cullen substituted for John Furey.

A2. Minutes of Previous Meeting on 16 June 2009 and Matters Arising

A2.1 The minutes were **agreed**.

A2.2 Catriona Riddell **advised** SEELB that:

- The Examination in Public on Aggregates had been held the previous week and it was expected that the Panel's report would be published at the beginning of December 2009.

- The Examination in Public on Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople Partial Review of the South East Plan is scheduled for the first week of February 2010. The Planning Panel had met the day before and had considered new information in respect of transit provision; the Planning Panel's recommended approach will be considered at the November meeting of the Strategy Board.

A2.3 Howard Ewing **advised** SEELB that Arun District Council's legal challenge of the South East Plan had been dealt with and the relevant paragraph quashed by the Crown Court as the wording had been included in error. The other challenges were in respect of the greenbelt around Guildford and in Oxfordshire; these were still going through the legal process.

A3. Update from GOSE

A3.1 Howard Ewing **advised** the Board that the Regional Grand Committee had met in Reading in September and all the South East region's MPs had attended; it is likely that there will be more of these committees.

A3.2 He **also advised** that several bids from across the region, amounting to approximately 4,500 jobs, had been made to the Government's jobs fund reported on at the last meeting. Further bids are being considered and the outcome will be known in November.

A4. Update from SEEDA

A4.1 Pam Alexander said that SEEDA is pleased with the feedback from recipients of its economic reports and would be happy to add anyone else who would like to receive them to the circulation list.

A4.2 She **advised** the Leaders' Board that the latest report shows that the South East is not setting the pace for recovery, and that services are being hit the hardest. The labour market is still subdued and therefore redundancies are still being made; although there is more than double the number of benefit claimants than a year ago, the South East still has a lower unemployment rate. Responding to a question, she **confirmed** that SEEDA is pressing Government to invest in the South East.

A4.3 She **also advised** that significant issues seem to be around bank loans; overdraft rates of 27% are not uncommon and there is still a reluctance between banks to lend. Responding to the comment that SMEs in Hampshire are not being supported by banks and they need to be more adventurous, Pam Alexander **advised** that SEEDA now has a South East Financial Services Forum which banks attend and to date there have been two meetings; it may be helpful for the Forum to have a discussion on regional variations to identify particular problems.

A4.4 Responding to the suggestion that it would be a worthwhile exercise to scope the number of people employed in civil engineering, construction, defence, etc. across the South East that are connected to the public sector, Pam Alexander **agreed** it would be worth considering this.

A4.5 She **further advised** that since the last meeting of the Leaders' Board the first meeting of the Regional Infrastructure Fund Investment Panel had taken place; this had allocated £15m of the funding available for RIF. Subsequent to that SEEDA's Board had endorsed the Panel's recommendations and is working with Ashford to get the agreements in place. Work is ongoing to identify opportunities to invest the remaining

RIF funds, in particular to commit the remaining £20m of DfT funding, at the earliest opportunity.

- A4.6 It was **agreed** that updates from the RIF Investment Panel should be a standing item for information.
- A4.7 Responding to the comment that since the region's Joint Europe Committee had ceased to exist it seemed that European issues and funding were being lost sight of, Pam Alexander **advised** that Paul Lovejoy will be taking on an overview of European issues and that there are critical milestones to meet; making sure that funding is being taken up is challenging. A comprehensive update will be provided. It was **agreed** that it would be helpful if SEEDA's European update has a wide circulation and that SEEC should be looking at ways of disseminating this information. It was **noted** that Paul Lovejoy had already agreed to provide updates.
- A4.8 It was **noted** that in addition to funding there are issues around European governance and legislation and there needs to be a constructive way of working between SEEDA and SEEC. It was **agreed** that SEEC should discuss these issues further and then have a further discussion with SEEDA.
- A4.9 Responding to a query about SEEDA's reorganisation, Pam Alexander **advised** that the consultation will be completed by mid-November; SEEDA will have a much narrower focus, concentrating on areas where interventions will add value. A summary of the revised Corporate Plan will be published at the annual open meeting in November.

A5. Government Consultation - Regional Strategies and Establishment of Leaders' Boards

- A5.1 The paper was received and the response to the consultation was **agreed** as drafted.

A6. Boards, Delivery Boards, and Planning Panel

a) Regional Housing and Regeneration Board

- A6.1 Elizabeth Cartwright **reported** that the first meeting of the RHRB had been very successful, although it was largely a "getting to know you" meeting; the RHRB will be supported by Jane Lawrence, the new RHRB Manager, and by three members of the Local Authority Chief Executives' Advisory Group. She highlighted the Government's response to the Regional Funding Advice submission, which emphasised the pressure on spending and hinted at cuts to come; she also highlighted concern about the proposed reduction in growth funding.
- A6.2 It was **agreed** that more detailed information on the HCA's budget across the South East would be provided at the January meeting of the Leaders' Board; this information would include a breakdown of the percentage spend on delivering housing and the percentage spend on wider regeneration initiatives, such as infrastructure investment, to enable housing development.
- A6.3 It was **also agreed** that a report on housing starts would be taken to the January meeting of the Leaders' Board; this would include affordable housing starts.

- A6.4 It was **noted** that members are very keen that the outcome of the study on the Housing Revenue Subsidy process is used to emphasise the unfairness of the system.
- A6.5 It was **noted** that SEEC intend to hold a half day conference on major issues in the New Year and that housing should be on the agenda. A plenary meeting is scheduled for 5 March but this could be brought forward to cover urgent issues.
- A6.6 It was **noted** the GLA's London Plan had been published this week and the figure to test was similar to that previously put forward; to meet London's targets the GLA will need to look to the East and South East. Following the consultation period, the Plan will be signed off by the London Mayor, not the Secretary of State. A proposed response to the consultation will be taken to the next meeting of the Partnership Board for sign off.

b) Regional Transport Board

A6.7 The report was received and points **noted** were:

- i) The initial findings of the aviation study will be considered at the RTB meeting on 23 October and reported back to the Strategy Board.
- ii) Members asked for clarification in respect of priorities for DaSTS projects; advice given in another forum had indicated that there is no priority in terms of the schemes that have been put forward, whereas this report refers to the delivery strategies for the West Sussex Coast and PUSH as being the region's top two priorities.

c) Partnership Board

A6.8 The minutes of the first meeting of the Partnership Board on 24 July were received and points **noted** were:

- i) Work is being done on six think pieces on key regional issues with input from experts. These will be debated at workshops to be held in February 2010 and are seen as a starting point for members' input into the Regional Strategy.
- ii) The Partnership Board website is now operational and meeting papers and the forward programme are available for downloading. It has a link to SEEDA's website and will have a link to the SEEC website when that is operational.
- iii) The delay in launching the SEEC website is due to the difficulty in obtaining a '.gov.uk' web address; when the site is in place it will have links to both the Partnership Board and SEEDA websites.

d) Strategy Board

A6.9 The minutes of the first Strategy Board meeting on 17 September 2009 were received and **noted**.

- A7. Forward Programme for the Partnership Board, Strategy Board, Regional Housing and Regeneration Board, Regional Transport Board, Regional Economic Development and Skills Board, and Planning Panel**
- A7.1 Responding to Paul Carter's query regarding airport capacity, Catriona Riddell **advised** that the work currently in hand would soon be available. Any additional work required would need to be commissioned by SEEC.
- A7.2 It was **noted** that the regional press had reported on a potential Ashford to Gatwick rail link; it was **agreed** that Martin Tugwell would be asked to provide the Board with more information.
- A7.3 It was **noted** that Paul Carter is talking to Lord Adonis about a rail link between Manston-Ashford/HSR and that he is keen for the Regional Transport Board to consider this issue.
- A7.4 It was **noted** that the first meeting of the Planning Panel had been held on 15 October and the next one is scheduled for 12 January 2010. Moira Gibson, Chairman of the Planning Panel, gave a brief report of the discussions at the meeting and the following points were **noted**:
- i) Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople sites - the Panel recommends a network of sites approach.
 - ii) The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and the wider infrastructure funding issues are causing concern and the Panel proposed that a robust response from the Partnership Board, jointly signed by Jim Brathwaite and Paul Carter, be sent.
 - iii) Concern had been noted in respect of Thames Basin Heaths, particularly in connection with management issues and the CIL process.
- A7.5 It was **noted** that the infrastructure agenda should be discussed at the SEEC plenary meeting scheduled for 4 December 2009.
- A7.6 Chris Williams **advised** members that the Local Authority Chief Executives' Advisory Group will be submitting a paper to the SEEC plenary in December setting out what the Group would want to do on a voluntary basis in the South East if a Conservative government is returned following the next General Election.
- A7.7 Catriona Riddell **advised** that the Strategy Unit has very little financial resource to cover consultations and is looking at how best to handle the Regional Strategy consultation. The Planning Panel wants thought to be given to getting community input to the strategy, more than what had originally been proposed.