

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND LEADERS' BOARD/
SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS' EXECUTIVE**

Date: 22 January 2010

Subject: **Consultation Requirements to Meet New Government
Guidance on the Establishment of Leaders' Boards**

Report of: Aidan Shutter, SEEC Policy Officer

Recommendation:

That the Leaders' Board agree the process for a six-week consultation period as set out in the report to meet the requirements contained within new Government guidance covering the establishment of Leaders' Boards.

1. Background

- 1.1 As the Leaders' Board will recall, The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act received Royal Assent on 12 November 2009. Following this, final guidance covering the Establishment of Leaders' Boards was published by Communities and Local Government on 22 December 2009 (published guidance attached as Appendix A).
- 1.2 The guidance states (para 10) that where Leaders' Board arrangements have been operating (as across the South East region) a six-week consultation period is appropriate as opposed to a 12-week duration. Also, as stated in the guidance (para 11), Leaders' Board arrangements should meet three broad criteria. It should:
- be streamlined and manageable, able to make strategic, long term decisions, and be able to engage effectively with their region's RDA;
 - be representative of Local Government across the whole of their region – including representatives from e.g. key sub-regions, upper and lower tier authorities, the main political groupings;
 - be comprised of local authority leaders, who are members with sufficient authority to act on behalf of all Local Government in the region.
- 1.3 The current 'scheme' (the terminology used in the guidance to describe Leaders' Board arrangements) was developed in 2009 and finally ratified by the SEEC Plenary at its inaugural meeting on 15 July 2009. In effect however, SEELB has been operating successfully since early 2009. This demonstrates that the current 'interim' arrangements that will form the basis of the consultation, are already bedded in and working well.

2. Overview of Current Leaders' Board Arrangements (the Scheme) for Consultation

- 2.1 The following description of current SEELB interim arrangements together with the proposed amendments will form the basis of the consultation exercise:

The Current '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 SEELB 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 structural arrangements are included in Appendix B.
- 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 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 are continually expanding.

Proposed Amendments to the 'Scheme'

- a) 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.
- b) One representative of the region's National Parks will become a member of SEELB from 1 April 2010 (when the bill is fully enacted).

Note: during this 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.

3. Partnership Working

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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.

4. Process for Consultation

- 4.1 It is suggested that the Leaders' Board approve the following process for consultation:
- The consultation will run from Monday 25 January to Monday 8 March 2010, meeting the six-week requirement.
 - The consultation, including the scheme arrangements detailed in para 2.1 above, and details of how to respond are published on both the SEEC and Partnership Board websites.
 - Responses to the consultation should be made in writing to Paul Watkins as SEEC Secretary.

- A short covering e-mail to be sent by Paul Watkins explaining how to access details of the consultation (via either website) to:
 - All SE Councils
 - SEEDA
 - GOSE
 - CLG
 - Police
 - Fire
 - Health
 - National Parks
 - Functional Sub-Regions – e.g. PUSH, MKSM
 - Others stakeholders (using existing database information)

4.2 A consultation progress report will be made to the SEEC Plenary meeting on 26 February 2010.

4.3 Taking account of responses received, the final 'Scheme' for the South East England Leaders' Board will be approved by the SEELB chairman and submitted to GOSE who will forward it to CLG for approval by the Secretary of State. It is expected that the final scheme will be submitted to GOSE by 1 April 2010.