

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEETING

Friday 4 April 2014

The Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining
1 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5DB

Present: Gordon Keymer CBE (Chairman)
Andrew Bowles
David Burbage MBE
Susan Chandler
Gary Cooke
Van Coulter
Myles Cullen
Nicolas Heslop
David Hodge
Keith House
David Neighbour
Tony Page
Carole Paternoster
Roy Perry
Martin Tett

In Attendance: Chris Williams, Buckinghamshire CC
Heather Bolton, SEEC
Nick Woolfenden, SEEC
Nathan Roach, SEEC / SESL
Roy Millard, SESPM
Philippa Mellish, SESL
Marianne Abley, iESE
Trevor Pugh, Surrey CC

- 1. Apologies, declarations of substitutes and declarations of interest**
 - 1.1 Apologies were received from John Burden, Ken Crookes, Roland Dibbs, Gill Mattock, Bob Standley. Gary Cooke substituted for Paul Carter CBE, Nicolas Heslop for Barry Norton and Susan Chandler for Paul Watkins. No declarations of interest were made.
- 2. Minutes of SEEC Executive on 13 November 2013 and matters arising**
 - 2.1 The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.
- 3. Responding to South East housing and planning pressures.**
 - 3a. South East response to Further Alterations to the London Plan (FALP)**
 - 3a.1 Nick Woolfenden (NW) summarised the key points in SEEC's draft response to the Mayor of London's consultation on FALP. Members said London needs to be clearer about how it will meet its own housing needs, and must do more to avoid extra pressure on building in the South East. They discussed including an estimate of the number of homes planned in the South East and the importance of working with other local authorities including in the East of England.

ACTION 1: Submit SEEC's FALP response and distribute copies to South East MPs.

ACTION 2: The response should suggest London also engages with LEPs.

ACTION 3: SEEC to further pursue co-operation with a wider group of local authorities.
 - 3b. Duty to Co-operate: South East implications**
 - 3b.1 Given that it is causing particular concern, HB asked whether SEEC should run a workshop on Duty-to-Co-operate, and if so how to scope such a workshop. Should it look at a process-driven approach, or start with the building blocks that need to be in place around strategic need? Members supported the proposal for a workshop and discussed inviting abutting authorities and drawing on work done elsewhere.

ACTION 4: SEEC to organise a workshop on Duty-to-Co-operate, scoping it around “building blocks”, and prepare a briefing for members ahead of the event.

3c. Independent review of local authority role in supporting housing supply.

3c.1 Keith House, (Lib-Dem, Eastleigh BC), who is co-chairing the review, summarised its remit, which is on housing finance, not planning. The review will look at what councils can do outside their role as planning authorities to support delivery of new homes. It will consider how to get institutional investment and examine what role local government can play in unlocking sites for development. The review will look at all tenures. A call for evidence closes on 23 May. The review will report to CLG and Treasury by the end of 2014. Members agreed SEEC should submit a response.

3c.2 NW asked if members wished to respond to Government consultation on a minimum threshold of 10 houses for affordable housing contributions under section 106. The consultation also covers increasing from 30% to 40% the proportion of major planning applications that councils must decide on time to avoid Ministerial sanctions.

ACTION 5: SEEC to submit a response to the independent review of local government’s role in supporting housing supply by 23 May 2014.

ACTION 6: SEEC to submit a high-level consultation response on section 106 only.

4. Investing in South East strategic transport

4a. Mind the Gap: South East transport needs and economic benefits

4a.1 HB advised that the Mind the Gap report, prepared by SEEC, SESL and SEDEEPT is close to completion, and asked members to endorse its submission to ministers. The report identifies strategic transport gaps in the South East and has three key requests:

- A new central-local project board to agree and take forward key schemes
- A balanced portfolio of Government transport investments
- Greater freedom for SE authorities to raise funding for these projects.

4a.2 Trevor Pugh (Surrey CC), Chairman of SEDEEPT, said the strength of the South East is in its international competitiveness. Investment in South East transport would offer returns on behalf of the whole UK but current arrangements don’t provide for this.

4a.3 Members were broadly supportive of the paper and endorsed its submission to ministers subject to clarification of the wording around the size of the South East economy, and inclusion of a clearer ask on funding requirements.

4b. Priorities to align with London’s Infrastructure 2050 work

4b.1 Following discussions with TFL, there is an opportunity for SEEC to submit transport projects for inclusion in London’s *Infrastructure 2050* work. SEEC has been asked to submit ideas by 31 May but London would like the schemes prioritised. HB asked members to consider categorising schemes according to the benefits they offer to London, either by relieving congestion or by opening up strategic economic corridors.

ACTION 7: SEEC to submit ideas for *Infrastructure 2050*, categorised as proposed.

5. Flooding in the South East: Steps to manage future problems

5.1 NW advised that SEEC-SESL had written jointly to DCLG and Defra ministers, ahead of a meeting on 9 April. Key issues highlighted were the scale of repair funding and future investment required. He also advised members that the Prime Minister has appointed lead ministers to look at how response and recovery has progressed locally.

5.2 Members welcomed government funding but said allocation is confusing and insufficient. Councils were asked to quantify repair costs too early, while roads were still under water. Despite the “money is no object” pledge, significant Bellwin thresholds remain and no provision is made for removal of flood damaged goods. The scoring system for funds takes no account of prevention works and does not take sufficient account of groundwater flooding. Members also felt Government needs to increase

future capital investment in defence schemes. Members were critical of the response from water companies, particularly Thames Water, which did not take responsibility for overflowing sewage. The Environment Agency lacked local knowledge in some areas.

6. EU funding: Emerging priorities from South East LEPs

6.1 SEEC had commissioned an analysis of LEP strategies on EU funding opportunities (£460m over seven years in the South East). Ministers' early indications suggest some strategies need more local distinctiveness, emphasising the importance of continued council engagement with LEPs. The report will be on SEEC's website in April. Members agreed a similar approach to LEP Strategic Economic Plans would be useful.

ACTION 8: SEEC to commission a similar report on LEP economic strategies.

7. Migration update: Proposal for a new Migration Impact Fund

7.1 Roy Millard (South East Strategic Partnership for Migration - SESPM) asked members if they supported reintroduction of a Migration Impact Fund (MIF) to help local authorities cope with migrants. One proposal was to fund this through increased visa fees. Members supported a new MIF but raised concern about the method of funding.

7.2 HB explained the Home Office is considering narrowing SESPM's remit to specifically cover asylum issues. She asked if members would welcome this or prefer SESPM to continue wider work on migration? Members felt a wider approach was more useful.

ACTION 9: SESPM to support MIF, but not suggest funding by increased visa fees.

ACTION 10: Advise the Home Office that members prefer SESPM to continue to work on a broad-range of migration issues.

8. SEEC expenditure 2013-14 and budget 2014-15

8.1 HB asked members to confirm the budget for 2014-15 and note the continued freeze in subscriptions. There has been an underspend of about £16,000 for 2013-14. Members agreed to carry forward £5,000 to £7,000 to 2014-15 for delayed work with SESL on the South East impact of the Care Cap. Members also discussed the importance of persuading non-subscribing councils to become members of SEEC.

ACTION 11: The 2014-15 budget was agreed.

ACTION 12: A sum to be carried forward for research on the impact of the Care Cap.

ACTION 13: SEEC to continue ongoing efforts to recruit non-member councils.

9. Verbal updates and items for information

9.1 Chris Williams summarised a SEEC-SESL meeting with London Councils on the placement of homeless people and a protocol on notifying the recipient authority when someone is placed. SEEC-SESL will convey to London that in two-tier areas it is important to notify the (District) housing authority and County Council social care team.

9.2 Myles Cullen (Chichester DC) and Andrew Bowles (Swale BC) updated members on their meeting with CLG Minister Brandon Lewis on Gypsy and Traveller use of land. They had called for changes in the law to make trespass for illegal camping a criminal offence. The Minister agreed to talk to the Home Office about encouraging police to use existing powers, and discussed reviewing legal definitions of Gypsies & Travellers.

ACTION 14: SEEC to send a follow-up letter to the Minister on the above points.

9.3 SEEC had been invited to support creation of an Independent Aircraft Noise Ombudsman. A decision was deferred given varying views about supporting this prior to the conclusions of the Airports Commission, costs and overlaps with existing bodies.

9.4 SEEC had written to CLG about its guidance on the frequency of refuse collections, arguing this should be decided locally. CLG Minister Brandon Lewis replied that Government was "encouraging" not directing councils to carry out weekly collections.

- 9.5 NW advised that he had attended stakeholder meetings organised by UK Power Networks and the Consumer Council for Water. These had yielded some useful information and contact points.
ACTION 15: SEEC to pass these contact details on to Local Resilience Forums.
- 9.6 HB said there was no update on co-commissioning a joint report with the LEPs to counter the city lobbying group. LEPs have been focussed on submitting their strategic plans, but Bucks Thames Valley LEP will update SEEC shortly.
- 9.7 A SEEC/SESL Manifesto Group is working on a document setting out what tools and funding the South East needs to deliver economic growth and better public services.
ACTION 16: The revised draft to be circulated for member comment.
- 10. Confirmed forward meeting dates:**
- 3 July 2014 – SEEC AGM (shared date with SESL)
 - 25 September 2014 – SEEC Executive (shared date with SESL)
 - 12 November 2014 – SEEC Executive
- 11. Any other business**
- 11.1 David Burbage (SESL Chairman) proposed a joint SEEC-SESL fringe event at the main party conferences this year. A final decision was deferred for further consideration.

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 12:40pm.

Signed: _____
Nicolas Heslop, Secretary & Treasurer

Date: **25 September 2014**