

**MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEETING**

**Wednesday 13 November 2013**

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



**Present:** David Hodge (Chairman)  
Andrew Bowles  
Paul Carter  
Van Coulter  
Myles Cullen  
Roland Dibbs  
Ann Ducker  
Moira Gibson  
Ian Hudspeth  
Peter Martin  
Stephen Parker  
Carole Paternoster  
Roy Perry  
Bob Standley  
Martin Tett

**In Attendance:** Chris Williams, Buckinghamshire CC  
Heather Bolton, SEEC  
Karina Horsham-Maynard, SEEC  
Nathan Roach, SEEC  
Roy Millard, SESPM  
Sir Michael Pitt, Planning Inspectorate  
Keith Holland, Planning Inspectorate  
Philippa Mellish, SESL  
Mona Seghal, LGA  
Marianne Overton, LGA.

**1. Apologies, declarations of substitutes and declarations of interest**

1.1 Apologies were received from John Burden, Keith House, Gordon Keymer, Gill Mattock, David Neighbour and Paul Watkins. Stephen Parker substituted for Ken Crookes, Ann Ducker for Barry Norton, and Peter Martin for Paul Watkins. No declarations of interest were made.

**2. Minutes of SEEC Executive on 23 September 2013 and matters arising**

2.1 The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

**3. Planning for growth & infrastructure**

3.1 Sir Michael Pitt, Planning Inspectorate (PI) Chief Executive, gave an overview of its work and role in supporting councils. He acknowledged there had been some confusion over localism. So far, 51% of councils have adopted a local plan, 25% have draft plans, but significant areas have no plans, causing problems with 5-year housing supply.

3.2 A typical year sees around 400,000 planning applications; 340,000 are approved by councils and around 54,000 refused. Of these, just over 14,000 are appealed to the PI, with 5,000 allowed, so just over 1% are overturned against council wishes. Government planning reform has created 8 new work streams for PI, including section 106 and monitoring poorly performing councils. Work on national infrastructure is also growing, but is expected to level out to 25-30 projects per year.

3.3 Keith Holland, PI Group Manager, summarised challenges for councils on local plans. The PI is now examining 80-90 plans, more than ever before. NPPF says plans have to be “positively prepared”. This means councils must start with an objective identification

of local development needs, prepare a plan to meet those needs and, if they can't be met, start duty to co-operate discussions with neighbouring councils. Prior to NPPF, plans could start with constraints but now the starting point had to be an objective assessment of needs. He said councils getting into difficulty had not started with such an assessment or had sought to manipulate the figures. If councils are unable to meet their needs, the PI must test local plans to assess if they maximise duty to co-operate.

- 3.4 Government's view is uncompromising – following abolition of regional strategies, responsibility for assessing needs and strategic planning now rests with councils. In discussion, members raised the following points:
- Abolition of county structure plans had been retrograde: no houses were being built in some areas due to greenbelt, while in others there was effectively a developers' charter. PI saw difficulty in resolving this without structure plans or regional plans.
  - Concern was expressed about apparently contradictory statements by ministers on greenbelt. PI called for a review of greenbelt to make it fit for the next 30 years.
  - There was concern about developers taking advantage by challenging duty to co-operate. PI stressed its independence means it would consider both sides' views.
  - Questions also covered land banking; agreeing major infrastructure proposals; consistency of PI decision-making; and PI's cost effectiveness. PI said primary legislation was needed to prevent landbanking. PI had cut its costs by £16m.

#### **4. Migration update**

- 4.1 Roy Millard, South East Strategic Partnership for Migration, provided an update on ONS data, which indicates net international migration to the South East has fallen 18%. However, high turnover of migrants can still have significant effect on council services. Data also indicates that this year, for the first time, there were more EU than non-EU migrants to the South East. That's significant as a report from University College London found that EU migrants are net contributors to the economy.
- 4.2 Ending immigration controls for Bulgarian and Romanian nationals has been the subject of much research, but likely migrant numbers remain unclear. Work from the National Institute of Economic and Social Research suggests the impact will be low because most migrants will be young and skilled. A report from Kent CC points out that income tax gains will not help councils fund services costing up to £3m a year.
- 4.3 The Home Office has asked councils to help address the issue of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from Albania, and wants councils to assist with data exchanges that will effect speedy removal of those using false documentation.
- ACTION 1: SESPM to ensure relevant Home Office officials talk to affected councils about Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children from Albania.**
- ACTION 2: SESPM to review the impact of migrant birth rates on South East school places.**
- ACTION 3: SESPM and SEEC to review the types of jobs filled by EU and non-EU migrants to the UK to inform councils' local work on skills.**

#### **5. European funding update**

- 5.1 Heather Bolton drew members' attention to £340m of EU match funding being made available during 2014-20. There will be a more local approach to management of this money than previously, but LEPs will set the priorities. It is very important that councils engage with LEPs to get the most from funding opportunities.
- 5.2 The local EU-funded rural LEADER programme has strong support. Ministers have confirmed it will continue via transitional funding and new Community-led programmes.
- 5.3 Members agreed it would be useful to share good practice on EU funding, including information about successful bids, effective projects and an overview of LEP proposals.

**ACTION 4: Research and report back to members on good practice, information sharing and LEP priorities.**

**6. Caring for our future – consultation response and upcoming conference**

6.1 Heather Bolton said a joint SEEC/SESL/SECASC response to the DoH consultation *Caring for our future: implementing funding reform*, had been submitted. It highlighted:

- cost increases facing the South East arising from high numbers of self-funders transferring to the public purse
- financial risks that councils could be exposed to, and the risk of an increase in unoccupied housing, as a consequence of deferred payments
- the need for clarity on the impact of out of area placements.

6.2 There will be a joint SEEC/SESL workshop about integrated health and care on 11 December 2013, including case studies on innovative approaches to integrated care.

6.3 Members agreed the main concern is the number of self funders transferring to the public purse. They suggested SEEC and SESL work to scope a figure showing the cost impact of the care cap across the South East. The impact of these increased costs was the main message to drive home to central government.

**ACTION 5: SEEC / SESL to explore options for scoping the cost of the care cap across the South East.**

**ACTION 6: Members to provide officer contacts for good integrated care case studies.**

**7. Clearing the hurdles: Localis-SEEC report. Update and next steps.**

7.1 The chair noted publication of the report and asked members for suggestions on specific next step actions. Members discussed using SEEC reserves to fund more research, and agreed this would be useful provided it aligns with LEP work and doesn't duplicate research already being undertaken. The chair asked members to provide specific suggestions to the SEEC office.

**ACTION 7: Members to suggest next steps for raising issues in the Localis- SEEC report**

**ACTION 8: Explore options for using SEEC reserves to fund additional think-tank research.**

**8. SEEC subscriptions and budget 2014.**

8.1 Members supported a proposal for SEEC to freeze subscriptions for 2014-15 and maintain a budget that replicates current year spending.

**ACTION 9: Recommend subscriptions and budget freeze to SEEC AGM in July 2014.**

**9. Items for information**

9.1 SEEC had written to Southern Water about water efficiency in the South East and SEEC and SESL had sent a joint submission to the Airports Commission. SEEC had been invited to become a "supporter" of Runways UK, an independent body planning a January conference to review the Airports Commission shortlist. Supporters received a 20% conference discount but members expressed reservations about supporting one event organiser in a competitive field.

**10. Confirmed forward meeting dates:**

- 6 February 2014 – SEEC All-member meeting (shared date with SESL)
- 4 April 2014 – SEEC Executive meeting
- 3 July 2014 – SEEC AGM (shared date with SESL)

**11. Any other business**

11.1 Members recorded condolences following the death of SEEC Executive member Cllr Mary Ballin, a Cabinet member at Bracknell Forest Council.

- 11.2 Myles Cullen urged SEEC to write to Ministers about short-term, illegal Gypsy and Traveller encampments, asking for more powers for councils to respond speedily.  
**ACTION 10: SEEC to write calling for more powers on short term illegal encampments.**
- 11.2 Members considered a SEEC response to a “statement of intent” from a new national College of Policing. The Chairman was given delegated powers to review a potential SEEC letter, mindful of the importance to councils of troubled families and other issues.  
**ACTION 11: Chairman to review/ approve letter to National College of Policing.**

There was no further business, and the meeting closed at 4.00pm.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Gordon Keymer, Chairman**

**Date:** **4 April 2014**