

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS

TASK & FINISH GROUP ON SOUTH EAST DIALOGUE WITH LONDON

Wednesday 12 November 2014 at 1.30pm

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



Present: Gordon Keymer CBE (chair)
Paul Bettison
Mark Dance
Keith House
Sue Murray
David Neighbour
Ann Newton
Tony Page
Carole Paternoster
Martin Tett
Chris Townsend

In Attendance: Chris Williams, Buckinghamshire CC
Heather Bolton, SEEC
Nick Woolfenden, SEEC
Nathan Roach, SEEC

Apologies: John Burden

1. Welcome and introduction

1.1 Gordon Keymer explained the Task & Finish Group had been established to address members' concerns about South East housing and other implications arising from London's growth plans (eg London Plan and Infrastructure 2050), particularly if London cannot continue to meet its housing needs within its boundaries. The Task and Finish Group will identify if, and how best, South East councils should engage politically with London on these issues, as well as other matters that underpin the South East and London's collective role as the UK's economic powerhouse.

2. Proposed terms of reference

2.1 Members agreed the proposed terms of reference, asking that they be reviewed for on-going suitability as the work progresses. Members also agreed political engagement was needed with both the Mayor of London/GLA and London Councils, given their distinct but complementary roles.

2.2 Establishing their willingness to engage with South East councils was a priority. The London Plan FALP planning inspector is likely to recommend the Mayor should engage more effectively with partners outside London on his future housing and development plans. Members were keen to ensure the South East seeks effective two-way political dialogue and influence over London's future plans at an early stage.

3. Discussion on key questions

3.1 Key topics: Members concluded initial engagement should focus on planning/housing and infrastructure/transport (including strategic schemes such as Crossrail 2 and the outcomes of the Airports Commission due in 2015). Other possible issues for future discussions include waste, minerals, utilities, placed families/looked-after children, education and health services.

3.2 Meetings: Members agreed initial scoping meetings should be arranged with the Mayor/GLA and, separately, London Councils to explore their interest in dialogue, if possible linked to existing meetings/events. Subject to agreement to establish further dialogue, future meeting form should follow function.

- 3.3 Attendance at meetings with London: Members agreed that attendance should be kept relatively small to allow for effective discussion, whilst ensuring a suitable balance of political parties and county/unitary/district members. Although members were keen to establish a more formal dialogue than current discussions between London Deputy Mayor Sir Edward Lister and SEEC/SESL, they wanted to avoid the bureaucracy of previous structures such as the Inter-regional Forum.
- 3.4 Engaging other partners: Members agreed that whilst the initial priority was developing dialogue between South East councillors and London, the possible engagement of East of England should also be explored for the longer-term. Consideration would also be given to engaging other partners such as LEPs once initial meetings had taken place.
- 3.5 South East officer support: Members agreed SEEC officers would support initial meetings, with ad-hoc assistance from an existing informal working-group of South East planning officers. However given SEEC's limited resources, there may be need for formal commitment of officer time from councils to support future meetings or related research/reports. Networks such as South East Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (SEDEEPT) may also be of assistance. It was also noted that officers from South East and East currently meet informally with GLA colleagues through a Strategic Spatial Planning Liaison Officers Group (SSPOLG).
- 3.6 Technical work: Members agreed that the need for any technical work to support dialogue with London should be considered once initial meetings have taken place and a programme of work is established.

4. Future working arrangements

- 4.1 Members agreed that initial scoping meetings with the Mayor/GLA and London Councils should be set up for spring 2015, if possibly linked to existing meetings/events.
- 4.2 The Task & Finish Group would conduct business by email, meeting only if necessary.
- 4.3 Members offered to share their local submissions to London's planning/infrastructure consultations with SEEC officers to help underpin future discussions, supplementing SEEC's collective responses.

5. Next steps and actions

ACTION 1: SEEC officers to arrange two initial scoping meetings between a South East member delegation and i) Mayor/GLA and ii) London Councils to discuss options for on-going dialogue.

ACTION 2: SEEC officers to scope agendas for initial meetings, focused on planning/housing and infrastructure/planning.

ACTION 3: Members to share local responses to relevant London consultations with SEEC officers.

ACTION 4: All to keep Task & Finish Group terms of reference under review to ensure fit for purpose.

ACTION 5: Members to take stock of next steps once initial meetings with London have taken place, including possible engagement with other partners eg East of England and LEPs.

6. Any other business

- 6.1 There was no further business and the meeting closed at 14.30.

Signed:

Gordon Keymer CBE, Chairman

Date: 19 March 2015