

THE SOUTH EAST ENGLAND STRATEGY BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2009

Present: Paul Carter (SEELB); Chairman
 Jeremy Birch (SEEDA)
 Louise Bloom (SEELB)
 Elizabeth Cartwright (SEELB)
 Les Dawson, OBE (SEEDA)
 Moira Gibson (SEELB)
 Keith Mitchell, CBE (SEEDA)
 Tony Page (SEELB)
 Alex Pratt, OBE (SEEDA)
 David Robertson (SEELB)
 Ayas Fallon-Khan (SEELB)
 Paul Watkins (SEELB)

In Attendance:

Delivery Partners: Harvey Bradshaw (Environment Agency)
 David Edwards (Homes and Communities Agency)
 Jon Griffiths (Highways Agency)
 Marinos Paphitis (Learning and Skills Council)

Stakeholder Liaison
 Group:

Ian Hepburn (Environmental partner)
 Mark Pearson (Economic partner)

Sheila Carroll (GOSE)

Officers:

Jeff Alexander (SEEDA)
 Peter Gilroy (LACE Advisory Group)
 Diana Pogson (Partnership Board Strategy Unit)
 Catriona Riddell (Partnership Board Strategy Unit)
 Tim Stansfeld (SEEDA)
 Jill Wedge (Partnership Board Strategy Unit)
 Louise Wilby (Partnership Board Strategy Unit)

1. Confirmation of Chairman

- 1.1 Paul Carter (SEELB) was confirmed as Chairman.
- 1.2 The Chairman welcomed members to the first meeting of the Board. Members and officers in attendance then introduced themselves.

2. Apologies for Absence and Declaration of Substitutes

- 2.1 Apologies were received from Pam Charlwood (SEEDA), Mary Mears (SEELB), Colin Byrne (GOSE), Pam Alexander (SEEDA), Paul Lovejoy (SEEDA), Martin Tugwell (Partnership Board/SEEDA) and Chris Williams (LACE Advisory Group).

2.2 Substitutions declared were Jeff Alexander for Paul Lovejoy, Jeremy Birch for Pam Charwood, Sheila Carroll for Colin Byrne, Peter Gilroy for Chris Williams and Ayas Fallon-Khan for Mary Mears.

3. Terms of Reference of the Strategy Board to Note:

3.1 Ian Hepburn welcomed the references to sustainable development in the document.

3.2 The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Strategy Board were **noted**.

4. Regional Planning Panel: Terms of Reference and Provisional Work Programme

4.1 Catriona Riddell drew the Board's attention to a typo error relating to Membership on page 4, para 1. The number of members should read **12** instead of 15. New text in bold. Page 4, para 4 should read, 'In addition, 3 Stakeholders (drawn from the Stakeholders Liaison Group and representing each of the environmental, social and economic stakeholder groups) will be invited to join the Planning Panel as observers.'

4.2 Keith Mitchell, CBE suggested that the word 'tiers' of Membership page 4, para 2 be amended to read, '11 Local Authority Members (drawn from South East England Councils and representative of all **types of principal authorities**).'

4.3 Points raised in discussion were:

- Ian Hepburn suggested that consideration be given to increasing the number of stakeholders to four to match the composition of stakeholder groups to include Town and Parish Councils. He also asked for future consideration to be given to further increasing this number to reflect the breadth of experience previously brought to the Regional Planning Committee.
- Responding, Catriona Riddell **advised** that the Delivery Board Working Group took the view that there should be one member from each of the social, economic and environmental sectors to reflect stakeholders' expertise on sustainability. In addition a significant role was proposed for a number of stakeholders on the Sustainability Appraisal Sounding Board which will provide technical advice **to** the Planning Panel.

4.4 The Chairman suggested that the ToR could be reviewed after a year if appropriate. This was **noted**.

The Board **agreed** the proposed ToR for the Planning Panel and the provisional work programme for the next six months with the following amendments:

1. Page 4, para 1. The number of members should read **12** instead of 15. Page 4, para 4 should read, "In addition, 3 Stakeholders (drawn from the Stakeholders Liaison Group and representing each of the environmental, social and economic stakeholder groups) will be invited to join the Planning Panel as observers.'
2. The word 'tiers' in Membership page 4, para 2 be amended to read, '11 Local Authority Members (drawn from South East England

Councils and representative of all **types of principal authorities**).'

5. Policy Statement on Regional Strategies and Guidance on the Establishment of Leaders' Boards – Response to Government consultation

- 5.1 Catriona Riddell introduced her report by indicating that Government's final guidance was anticipated when the Bill received Royal Assent at the end of 2009. She emphasised that the Partnership Board will own the Regional Strategy process throughout until the final sign-off by the Secretary of State which will help to streamline the process.
- 5.2 She advised that there will be significant regional flexibility regarding policy content. She noted that Government had outlined the broad issues to be included as housing provision, climate change and economic growth. It would be for the region to determine its priorities and decide where a regional steer was appropriate.
- 5.3 The new process will be much shorter than the RSS, although it will not be considered 'short' given the statutory process it has to be prepared within. The Regional Delivery Plan (RDP) will, however, provide greater flexibility as it will cover a much shorter period (3-5 years) will be reviewed annually and will not be subject to the same level of testing. Catriona Riddell welcomed this, noting the greater flexibility to deliver the Strategy.
- 5.4 Catriona Riddell anticipated that the Partnership Board will sign off the Project Plan at the start of 2010 with the total process taking just over three years. She welcomed the higher level of context for local authorities enabling a rapid move to delivering the Strategy.
- 5.5 Points raised in the ensuing discussion were:
- The Chairman welcomed the emphasis on sub-regions and suggested that this should be the focus of a half day workshop.
 - Ian Hepburn asked for the second sentence, page 4, para 2.2 to be amended to read, 'All local authorities, **at all levels**, will have a key role in the development of the Regional Strategy, and it is important that the final Policy Statement properly recognises this.' It was **agreed** not to make this amendment at this time.

The Board **agreed** its response to the Government's consultation document 'Policy Statement on Regional Strategies and Guidance on the Establishment of Leaders' Boards' as set out in **Annex 1**.

6. Regional Strategy: Initial Thoughts on Scope and Content

- 6.1 Catriona Riddell provided the background to her report. Two context-setting workshops will be arranged in February 2010 on the key drivers.
- 6.2 Points **noted** during the following discussion were:
- It was confirmed that the key drivers listed on page 3, para 1.4 had equal weight.
 - Keith Mitchell, CBE queried whether the reference to 'sustainable development framework' on page 1, para 1.1 equated explicitly with social, environmental and economic well-being.

- Referring to page 1, para iv) Jeremy Birch stressed the importance of balancing the regional economic requirement with the local evidence based approach. He also suggested that regional requirements needed to be made explicit.
 - The Chairman stressed the importance of a more explicit common agenda with the Greater London Authority. Progress is being made through the Inter-Regional Forum with the Mayor of London having attended a recent meeting.
- 6.3 Catriona Riddell suggested strengthening the wording of para iv) to make these points more explicit. 'The Regional Strategy will be driven by bottom-up evidence and tested against **wider inter-regional and national policy.**' She stressed the importance of understanding the impact of policy at ground level which also needed to be tested against regional and inter-regional priorities. This will enable the Strategy Board to determine its key priorities.
- 6.4 Elizabeth Cartwright sought clarification about the reference to the use of administrative boundaries particularly for monitoring purposes (page 5, para 2.12). Catriona Riddell acknowledged the problem caused by the many definitions of sub-regions and urged the Board to debate this. She recommended administrative boundaries as the easiest to manage.
- 6.5 Tony Page strongly disagreed stating that local government boundaries were not designed to solve current problems. He believed such an approach would impose a straight jacket and advised that Berkshire authorities were collaborating to overcome this. Louise Bloom cautioned against over prescription of sub-regional boundaries.
- 6.6 It was noted that the views of the Highways Agency and the Homes and Communities Agency should be sought in relation to sub-regions as they are developing Local Investment Agreements based on sub-regional geography.
- 6.7 Catriona Riddell advised that the Regional Strategy will be at a higher level and more light touch than the South East Plan or the Regional Economic Strategy (RES). She urged the Board to consider the issue of the Regional Sustainability Framework and whether this should remain 'self standing' or integrated into the Regional Strategy. She noted the lack of clarity about the Government's intention in this respect.

The Board **agreed**:

1. The following guiding principles for the Regional Strategy which will be taken forward into the project plan process.
 - i) The Regional Strategy will integrate objectives for economic development and spatial planning within a sustainable development framework.

The Board **agreed** to amend the reference to 'sustainable development framework' to equate more explicitly with the key drivers of the economy, climate change and housing: Catriona Riddell to provide suitable wording.
 - ii) The Regional Strategy will be a true 'regional' strategy, focusing on where a regional policy perspective adds value.

- iii) The Regional Strategy will take the current strategic framework provided by the South East Plan and Regional Economic Strategy as a starting point and focus revisions on where circumstances, trends or wider public policy objectives have changed.
- iv) The Regional Strategy will be driven by bottom-up evidence and tested against a wider policy/evidence base.

The Board **agreed** to make the references to the regional requirements more explicit.

- 2. Considered the working timetable for the process and **agreed** this as a basis for informing the Regional Strategy project plan.
- 3. **Noted** the proposals for embedding sustainable development into the Regional Strategy and the proposals for ensuring continuous stakeholder engagement in the process, both of which will be formalised through the project plan.

In addition, it was **agreed** that Catriona Riddell will provide alternative wording to make the reference to 'sustainable development framework' on page 1, para 1.1 equate explicitly with social, environmental and economic well-being.

7. Regional Delivery Plan: Update

- 7.1 Tim Stansfeld introduced the report on behalf of Martin Tugwell. He advised that the evolving single Regional Strategy, will be informed by the investment priorities of South East Plan, the RES and a tight economic climate. An initial outline of the framework for the RDP will be brought to the next meeting.
- 7.2 He drew the Board's attention to pages 3-4, paras 2.5 and 2.6 emphasising the need for delivery boards and the Strategy Board to apply greater rigour in the identification of investment priorities. The Chairman suggested that the proposed workshop considered this issue.
- 7.3 Ian Hepburn asked that greater consideration be given to page 3, para 2.2:

- | | |
|-------|---|
| PSA27 | lead the global effort to avoid dangerous climate change; |
| | and |
| PSA28 | secure a healthy natural environment for today and the future |

The Board **agreed** to adopt the working timetable for preparing the Regional Delivery Plan as set out in section 2 of the report.

8. Items for Information:

8a. Terms of Reference for Regional Transport Board and Regional Housing and Regeneration Board

- 8a.1 The following points were raised in discussion:
 - Alex Pratt, OBE suggested that the proposed arrangement for a named individual nominated at the same time as the main representative is nominated, was too prescriptive.

- David Robertson stressed the need for the alternate to have the relevant knowledge and experience to enable them to contribute effectively

The Board **agreed** that a flexible approach is required and this will be reviewed.

8b. Delivery Boards: Briefing Note

This was **noted**.

8c. Regional Transport Board Report, 24 July 2009

This was **noted**.

8d Regional Housing and Regeneration Board Report, 8 September 2009

8d.1 The Chairman of the Regional Housing and Regeneration Board (RHRB) introduced Jane Lawrence, the new Board Manager for the RHRB.

8d.2 The Chairman provided an overview of her report. She noted that HCA was committed to providing 10,207 homes in 2009/10 and had built 1,569 homes (15%) by the end of June 2009. This was a considerable improvement on the previous year.

8d.3 She expressed concern about the inadequate funding available to provide the required number of new sites for Gypsies and Travellers. She emphasised the high costs of new site provision compared with the subsidy needed for a new affordable home. She queried whether current bids for Gypsies and Traveller Sites represented good value for money.

8d.4 David Edwards advised careful consideration of the investment programme which included grant rate, cross subsidy and Registered Social Landlords. He advised that comparison of new sites for Gypsies and Travellers with new sites to deliver affordable housing was not comparing like with like. He reported that in order to ease the acceptance of some very poor quality sites local authorities and others were looking for significant funding.

8d.5 David Edwards responded to a question from the Chairman, about how quickly committed budget resulted in new homes being built. He advised that the 85% committed budget, provided in HCA's quarterly report to the RHRB, referred to schemes which had been agreed. He acknowledged some time lag before delivery with some schemes having been put on hold in 2008. It was anticipated that these schemes will now move more quickly. He also advised that previously 50% of the Housing Corporation's business had been conducted in the last financial quarter. This was no longer the case.

8d.6 Catriona Riddell reported that Local Investment Agreements, being developed by HCA, sought to aid delivery in the sub-regions. She suggested HCA be invited to a workshop to discuss the sub-regions.

8d.7 Paul Watkins expressed his disappointment in the reduction of the Growth Points Fund and the inflexibility of these arrangements. He suggested discussion of these issues with CLG.

The report was **noted**.

8e Economic, Development and Skills Board

- 8e.1 Diana Pogson reported that the ToR are being finalised and circulated. The first meeting of the Board is planned to take place in late October or early November.
- 8e.2 Mark Pearson asked for the inclusion of stakeholders on the Board.
- 8e.3 The Chairman agreed that membership needed to be broadened as appropriate and suggested that the new Skills Funding Agency, replacing the Learning and Skills Council, should also be represented. Marinos Paphitis will ensure both organisations are closely involved.
- 8e.4 Peter Gilroy observed that consistently fast broadband connection was crucial for economic development and would significantly reduce traffic congestion. He urged that this inter-regional issue be urgently discussed at national level. Peter Gilroy will present a report to a future meeting of the Board.

The report was **noted**.

8f Regional Infrastructure Fund

- 8f.1 Ian Hepburn asked whether the activity of the fund was transparent.
- 8f.2 Members asked for details of the bids to be brought to future meetings and for the minutes of the Regional Infrastructure Fund Panel meetings to be made available.
- 8f.3 It was **agreed** that Martin Tugwell will provide an update to the next meeting of the Board.

The report was **noted**.

9. Any Other Business

- 9.1 There was none.
- 9.2 There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.58.

10. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 26 November 2009 at a central London venue.

- 10.1 Diana Pogson advised members that the Strategy Unit is trying to organise the November workshop on the same day as the next Strategy Board meeting.