

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS

DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2009/10

APRIL 2009

(Updated 27.4.09)

INTRODUCTION

The Role and Status of South East England Councils (SEEC)

As a result of the Government's Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration (SNR), changes have been made to the regional architecture, and in particular to the way in which regional planning, transport, housing and economic development functions are carried out across the English regions. The most significant changes are a new 'joint responsibility' between the Regional Development Agencies and a new body of local authority Leaders from the region to develop and sign off a single Regional Strategy. This new single strategy will replace the existing regional spatial and regional economic strategies. As a consequence of the new arrangements, the existing Regional Assemblies are also being abolished.

In the South East, the Regional Assembly (SEERA) has already been wound up and replaced by the South East England Councils (SEEC). The Development Agency and the new South East England Leaders' Board (SEELB) are working together to establish new arrangements to discharge their joint responsibilities. A new South East England Strategy Board and South East England Partnership Board form the major governance arrangements to deliver the new joint responsibilities.

SEEC has been established to represent and promote the views and interests of local government in the region. It has a wide remit, not just to provide an input into the development and implementation of the Single Regional Strategy. It will, amongst other things, ensure effective representation of local authority interests on regional, national and international bodies, will scrutinise the activities of other agencies at the regional level and will provide a forum for the consideration and determination of regional issues including strategic policies and investment priorities.

There were significant objections to the original Government consultation on SNR which proposed that unelected Regional Development Agencies should alone be responsible for signing off the strategy. Now that changes have been incorporated to make this a joint responsibility, SEEC will be able to provide the vital democratic input which properly represents all communities and residents across South East England.

The Status of this Business Plan

This draft Business Plan has been prepared by the SEEC Executive Board. It will be considered for adoption at the Plenary meeting of all councils in South East on 15th July 2009.

In drawing up this Business Plan the Executive Board has recognised that the recently established arrangements for regional planning may change in the not too distant future. It has therefore endeavoured to "future proof" the work of SEEC. The Business Plan will therefore be kept under review throughout 2009/10 and may be subject to change.

SEEC Objectives

1. To be the democratically representative voice of South East England.
 - a. To arrange meetings of the Plenary of Member Councils in the South East; its Leaders' Board* and appropriate sub-committees and working groups.
 - b. To nominate members to serve on appropriate national and regional boards, committees and working groups.
 - c. To influence national and European policies and resource allocation.
2. To provide a framework for co-ordinated action by South East England Councils, or groups of councils, on issues of regional or sub-regional significance.
3. To receive regular reports on the "state of the region" and to formulate an appropriate response by Councils.
4. To contribute to the development, implementation and monitoring of regional strategic policies, which at present are represented by the single Regional Strategy.
 - a. To ensure that the views of the Councils are established as the guiding principles in the development of the Strategy through its representation on the Partnership and Strategy Boards.
 - b. To ensure that the agreed strategy is implemented through the Planning 'Panel', Regional Transport, Housing and Regeneration, Economic Development and Skills Boards and any other such boards as may be established.

The relationship of SEEC with the Partnership and Strategy Boards, and the various regional boards so far established is set out in Appendix 1.

5.
 - a. To communicate the work of SEEC and its various boards, sub-committees and working groups to all member councils to enable individual councils to provide input as appropriate to issues under consideration and to be kept informed of decisions taken.
 - b. To communicate the work of SEEC to appropriate outside bodies (including national Government and the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) and to the general public.

* including a representative of the National Parks

KEY ACTIVITIES FOR 2009/10

	ACTIVITY	DESIRED OUTCOME
Objective 1: The democratically representative voice of South East England		
1.1	Establish the basis of a relationship with the LGA	The LGA is better able to represent the views of South East England Councils
1.2	Support members who are nominated to serve on national and regional boards and to receive timely feedback on issues considered and decided	The views of SEEC members are influential in shaping policies and decisions.
1.3	Establish an appropriate mechanism to monitor and influence European policies and funding	SEEC is better able to influence emerging European policies and European funding for the South East is maximised.
1.4	Review the structure and membership of Improvement and Efficiency South East (IESE)	The funding available from the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership is directed to the issues of highest priority in the South East.
1.5	Establish appropriate scrutiny of SEEDA	The wider activities of SEEDA are better understood by SEEC members and SEEC's views are taken into account.
Objective 2: Provide a framework for co-ordinated action		
2.1	Increase involvement in the Inter-Regional Forum, the English Regions Network and in meetings of the GLA and ERA	Views of SEEC are better understood by surrounding areas and there is greater co-ordination across the greater South East.
2.2	Establish an appropriate mechanism for handling migration issues at the regional level	There is better understanding of the implications of migration and skills, training, workforce planning, housing, social cohesion and child protection. Opportunities for external funding are maximised.
2.3	Co-ordinate action by groups of councils to maximise the benefits of London Olympics 2012	The benefits to the South East are maximised and problems minimised.
Objective 3: Monitoring the state of the region		
3.1	Consider an annual report on the state of the region prepared by the South East England Strategy Unit (SEESU)	SEEC is better informed of the latest trends and developments in the South East and formulates an appropriate response.

3.2	Consider a report on health and well being issues in the South East	SEEC is better informed of current and emerging issues and formulates an appropriate response.
3.3	Consider a report on crime and disorder issues in the South East	SEEC is better informed of current and emerging issues and formulates an appropriate response.
Objective 4: The development and implementation of regional strategic policies		
4.1	Respond to the final version of the South East Plan	If appropriate, SEEC develops a collective response to the Government's plans.
4.2	Establish with SEEDA the Partnership and Strategy Boards	Organisational arrangements for the preparation of the Single Regional Strategy are established and members briefed on their respective roles.
4.3	Respond to Government consultation on the Reviews of Aggregates and Gypsies and Travellers	Opportunity for SEEC to make its views known to the public and secure an invitation to the EiPs.
4.4	Participate in the Examinations in Public into Aggregates and Gypsies and Travellers	The submitted policies are tested for robustness in a formal examination.
4.5	Commence work on the preparation of a single Regional Strategy	SEEC establishes the guiding principles for the development of the Strategy.
4.6	Contribute to a Regional Planning 'Panel'	SEEC provides advice to the Strategy Board on spatial planning issues and to members on the preparation and co-ordination of LDFs in the region.
4.7	Agree a prioritised programme of transport investment through the Regional Transport Board.	SEEC's views are reflected in transport priorities.
4.8	Agree a prioritised programme of housing and regeneration investment through the Regional Housing and Regeneration Board.	SEEC's views are reflected in housing and regeneration priorities.
4.9	Contribute to a Regional Economic Development and Skills Board	SEEC's views are reflected in the work of the Board.
Objective 5: Communicate the work of SEEC with its members, partners and the public		
5.1	Develop and implement a Communication Strategy	SEEC members are better informed and have an opportunity to contribute to the work of SEEC partners and the public are better informed of the value of SEEC.

FINANCIAL PLAN

This financial plan has been drawn up on the following assumptions:

1. Funding for the preparation of the Single Regional Strategy will be provided by CLG and managed by SEESU.
2. Subscription levels for SEEC will be no more than 25% of the subscription levels formerly paid by councils to SEERA.
3. The support arrangements for SEEC will be "light touch" and separate from those of SEESU, although may be accommodated alongside them. They will comprise an office manager (part-time?), a policy officer, a communications officer (part-time) and administrative support.
4. Additional support will be provided by the Local Authority Chief Executives across the region supported by appropriate Directors drawn from Counties, Unitaries and Districts. The Directors can draw on their technical support as necessary.

Income	Indicative Budget (£000's)
Subscriptions (74 Councils)	150,000
Expenditure	Indicative Budget (£000's)
Staff	
- Communications Manager (p/t)	20,000
- Policy Officer (f/t)?	35,000
- Office Manager (p/t)?	20,000
- Office Support (p/t)?	15,000
Meeting and Conference costs	10,000
Accommodation	10,000
Post and Printing	2,500
Office Overheads	5,000
Research/Commissions	20,000
Contingencies	12,500
Total Spend	£150,000

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEEC AND SEEDA IN THE PREPARATION OF A REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

The South East England Regional Assembly was dissolved on 31 March 2009. This resulted from the Government's plans to streamline regional working arrangements as part of its Sub-national Review (SNR) of Economic Development and Regeneration. Responsibility for regional planning now rests with a new model of joint governance by local government - in the shape of **South East England Councils (SEEC)** – and the **South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)**.

There will be a joint body to prepare a Single Regional Strategy – joining up, and building on, the Assembly's South East Plan and SEEDA's Regional Economic Strategy. SEEC and SEEDA will work closely with delivery agencies, such as the Highways Agency, and stakeholder groups.

There will be **two decision-making boards**:

- The high-level **South East England Partnership Board** comprising four SEEDA board members and eight members of South East England Leaders' Board (SEELB) – the executive committee of SEEC.

This Board will be responsible for:

- Commissioning and signing-off the Single Regional Strategy
- Signing-off the regional delivery plan
- Signing-off the annual monitoring report

This Board becomes the regional planning body until the SNR legislation is passed. During this interim period (whilst the Partnership Board is the RPB) a representative of the National Parks will be co-opted on to the Board

- The **Strategy Board** comprising:
Members - four SEEDA Board members and eight SEELB members
Observers - four Delivery Partners (statutory agents such as the Environment Agency) and two Stakeholders

This Board will be responsible for:

- High level steering of the Regional Strategy process and content
- The allocation of CLG funding for the regional strategy and signing-off the business plan/budget
- Integrating investment priorities
- Ensuring alignment between strategy and delivery
- Ensuring sustainable growth is at the heart of the regional strategy
- Developing a single evidence base
- Ensuring effective engagement with stakeholders and public
- Overseeing any continuing work required on implementing the South East plan

Supporting the decision-making Boards, there will be **Delivery Boards** (eg Transport Board), together with a small number of **'Working Groups'** to help steer specific aspects of the Regional Strategy and support the Strategy Board.

A group is currently considering the detail around the roles and membership of the delivery boards and the working groups, and the relationship between them.

Stakeholders have played an important part in the development of current regional strategies in the South East. They will continue to play an important role in the new regional strategy process at both the 'member' and 'technical' levels, but won't be part of the formal decision-making process.

The exact details of Stakeholder involvement will be agreed in the near future.

