

Wider South East Roundtables

10 July 2015

Committee Room 2, City Hall, London

Notes

Emerging consensus from the first two Roundtables

Following a Wider South East Summit in March 2015, Roundtable discussions were set up to progress political discussion about future co-ordination/co-operation between the Mayor of London, the South East and East of England on strategic growth and infrastructure issues. Leaders from all councils and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) representatives in the South East and East were invited to attend small Roundtable meetings with the GLA, with the first two sessions held on 10 July and a further three in September. A second Wider South East Summit on 11 December 2015 will consider the Roundtable findings and the way forward.

Attendees at both Roundtable sessions supported the need for political engagement, with the following emerging consensus on four broad topics of discussion as identified by the independent facilitator.

1. Purpose/scope

There must be a recognition of the importance of the strong mutual relationship between London, East and the South East.

The focus must be on economic prosperity as well as housing and planning, and must address transport and other strategic infrastructure in the wider sense.

The purpose must relate to the strategic big picture, with mechanisms for more focused work on particular areas such as transport corridors.

There is a need before the September sessions to begin to refine the scope/scale of future political engagement.

2. Geography

The proposed mechanism should relate to the areas covered by London, East and South East of England. The focus should be on the area as a whole with mechanisms for more detailed work being done on specific localities. It would complement not duplicate cross-boundary relationships.

3. Political mechanisms

The mechanisms should be bureaucratically light. They should enable different voices to be heard and not be dominated by a particular place or type of council. The principles of the proposed arrangements should be:

- inclusive (possibly a summit at least once a year);
- workable (possibly a smaller steering group/executive);
- accountability of the smaller group to the wider membership (with a concerted effort on communications to enable the accountability to work);
- operates in an all-party fashion.

There is a need for a more detailed discussion on the design of these mechanisms at the September sessions.

4. Support and resources

Consideration must be given to developing a shared and consistent data base, building on existing work and information.

Any support mechanism must be light touch and build on existing arrangements.

More work is needed on this once the scope and scale of the future engagement have been refined.

South East England Roundtable (9.30 am)

Welcome

Sir Edward Lister (Deputy Mayor for Planning at the Greater London Authority) welcomed the significant interest by Council Members and LEPs within the wider South East in these Roundtable discussions. He reiterated that London could meet its own housing need but, as throughout the wider South East, delivery was not keeping up. He referred to the publication of the Government's Productivity Report and the need to consider its implications for planning. Heather Bolton (Director at South East England Councils) highlighted that the South East has a very successful economy in its own right and shared challenges with London on housing demand, overstretched infrastructure and balancing development needs with protected designations. It was important for London and South East politicians to work together to shape these strategic issues for the future.

Scene Setting

Stewart Murray, Assistant Director Planning, and Jorn Peters, Senior Strategic Planner, from the GLA gave a brief presentation (provided separately) setting the scene for the discussion.

Roundtable discussion

Phil Swann from Shared Intelligence independently facilitated the Roundtable discussion. The following key points were discussed by participants:

Purpose/Scope

- No one area (London, East or South East of England) or type of council should dominate another within the new arrangements. The new arrangements must be democratic and accountable.
- Key issues to consider include jobs growth, housing demand, protected land, and strategic infrastructure. Strategic infrastructure covers not only transport but also e.g. health, water, energy. Infrastructure and spatial planning regimes do not match, and despite the application of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) there are significant funding gaps.

Geography

- Arrangements should look at the whole wider South East, complementing not replacing existing one-to-one relationships between councils in London, the East and South East of England. The focus of the new arrangements should be on issues relevant for the whole wider South East.

Political mechanisms

- SERPLAN worked for 30 years as a strategic planning mechanism. It was acknowledged that circumstances are different today, but one could learn from the past for new bottom-up arrangements.
- There should be a genuine commitment from all partners that the new structure does not become a 'talking shop'. In large groups (beyond the size of these Roundtables) it would be difficult to maintain discussion and interest. Therefore, the new mechanism should include a small overarching political steering group with the different tiers of local authorities involved, and any additional detailed work on specific strategic areas, such as corridors or

other geographies, could be undertaken by small specialised groups. Regular but infrequent plenary sessions would allow everybody to get involved directly. Regular communication is needed to ensure everybody remains engaged.

- The Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) welcomed the invitation to participate at these Roundtable discussions. They could help in particular with the strategic delivery of growth.

Support and resources

- There are limited resources currently available in local authorities for this strategic engagement work. Work should be facilitated through existing bodies such as SEEC, EELGA and the GLA rather than creating a new organisation/secretariat. Some officer support was already in place through the Spatial Strategic Planning Officer Liaison Group (SSPOLG), which had already been established in 2013 during the preparation of the Further Alterations to the London Plan to address wider South East issues. Officers were asked to refine the purpose/scope of the future engagement, so that mechanisms and necessary technical support can be considered more fully at the September Roundtables.
- Robust, consistent and objective data/evidence is required to inform the issues the new arrangement will be dealing with. SSPOLG is already sharing data, e.g. on demography. Local authorities also hold valuable strategic evidence gained through the preparation of their Local Plans. However, the focus should remain on broad strategic issues without going towards the creation of a form of plan for the wider South East.

East of England Roundtable (2.30 pm)

Welcome

Fiona Fletcher Smith (Executive Director-Development, Enterprise & Environment at the GLA) reminded participants why better co-operation was so important referring in particular to the potential benefits in terms of economic development and infrastructure investment. Cllr Jason Ablewhite (Leader of Huntingdonshire District Council and new Chair of the East of England Local Government Association) reiterated the key principles that were set out by his predecessor at the Wider South East Summit in March including recognition of the variety of views within the wider South East and the challenges the places around London are facing as well as the importance of economic growth alongside housing growth.

Scene Setting

Jorn Peters, Senior Strategic Planner, at the GLA gave a brief presentation (provided separately) setting the scene for the discussion.

Roundtable discussion

Phil Swann from Shared Intelligence independently facilitated the Roundtable discussion. The following key points were discussed by participants:

Purpose/scope

- The new arrangements should focus on 'big picture' issues that go beyond local relevance.
- London already has a strong voice, but local authorities within the wider South East are not getting sufficient support for infrastructure required to accommodate their strategic growth

ambitions. LEPs can provide some support to speed up delivery and at a strategic level look e.g. into the forward funding of infrastructure.

Geography

- Strategic growth areas should be recognised, but where there are existing structures such as for the London Stansted Cambridge corridor; these should not be duplicated.

Political mechanisms

- There is a need for every authority to buy into the new emerging arrangement, and smart communication is required to keep the engagement going over time.
- Every authority should be involved at some level. Summits like the one in March may work well in this respect. However, a small workable executive structure that has the confidence of all authorities across all political parties is needed to get the engagement work done. Effective communication between all authorities and this small group is required.

Support and resources

- The significant variation in strategic geographies (e.g. Housing Market Areas) and data (e.g. Strategic Housing Market Assessments) needs to be addressed. The new arrangements should facilitate co-ordination and consider appropriate geographies and datasets for key strategic issues. There may also be benefits in jointly commissioning research work that produces consistent outputs/evidence across the wider South East.

Emerging consensus and next steps

At both sessions there was support for better engagement arrangements. The summary on page 1 of this note represents the emerging consensus as identified by the independent facilitator from the two first Roundtable sessions. These will inform the second set of Roundtable discussions in Sept 2015 as well as the Outer London Commission's consideration of the wider South East relations.

List of Attendees

See Annex 1

Annex 1 List of Attendees

South East of England Roundtable (9.30 am)

CLlr Richard Bower	Cabinet Member for Planning & Infrastructure, Arun DC
CLlr Neil Bell	Deputy Leader, Ashford BC
CLlr Martin Tett	Leader, Buckinghamshire CC
CLlr Isobel Darby	Leader, Chiltern DC
CLlr Keith House	Leader, Eastleigh BC
CLlr John Cubitt	Leader, Gravesham BC
CLlr Stephen Parker	Leader, Hart DC
CLlr Garry Wall	Leader, Mid Sussex DC
CLlr Sarah Seed	Executive Member for Planning, Mole Valley DC
CLlr Roland Dibbs	Cabinet Member for Environment & Service Delivery, Rushmoor BC
CLlr Robert Piper	Portfolio Holder for Planning, Sevenoaks DC
CLlr Howard Rogers	Cabinet Member Planning & Transportation, Tonbridge & Malling BC
CLlr Christine Field	Deputy Leader, West Sussex CC
Geoff French	Chairman, Enterprise M3 LEP
Graham Brown	Board Member, South East LEP
Sir Edward Lister	Deputy Mayor for Planning, Greater London Authority (GLA)

Supporting officers/observers:

Phil Swann	Facilitator, Shared Intelligence
Brian Horton	Adviser, South East LEP
Jack Straw	Planning Policy Manager, Mole Valley DC
Daniel Hawes	Planning Policy Manager, Hart DC
Heather Bolton	Director, South East England Councils (SEEC)
Nick Woolfenden	Head of Policy Co-ordination, SEEC
Fiona Fletcher Smith	Executive Director-Development, Enterprise & Environment, GLA
Stewart Murray	Assistant Director Planning, GLA
Richard Linton	Strategic Planning Manager, GLA
Jorn Peters	Senior Strategic Planner, GLA
Mike Keegan	Transport for London

East of England Roundtable (2.30 pm)

CLlr Dr Richard Moore	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning, Basildon DC
CLlr Colleen Atkins	Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Regulatory Services, Bedford BC
CLlr Bill Frame	Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Planning, Colchester BC
CLlr Roger Hirst	Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Libraries, Planning and the Environment, Essex CC
CLlr Derrick Ashley	Cabinet member for Environment, Transport and Planning, Hertfordshire CC
CLlr Harvey Cohen	Planning Portfolio Holder, Hertsmere BC
CLlr Jason Ablewhite	Leader, Huntingdonshire DC
CLlr Roy Davis	Elected Member, Luton BC
CLlr Derrick Haley	Leader, Mid Suffolk DC
CLlr Terry Cutmore	Leader, Rochford DC
CLlr John Fuller	Leader, South Norfolk Council
CLlr Ron Woodley	Leader, Southend-on-Sea BC
CLlr Julian Daly	Leader, St Albans DC
CLlr John Gardner	Deputy Leader - Environment and Economy, Stevenage BC
CLlr Mandy Perkins	Executive Member for Planning, Housing & Community, Welwyn Hatfield BC
Hilary Chipping	Head of Infrastructure, SEM LEP
Adrian Cannard	Strategy & Planning Director, GCGP LEP
Fiona Fletcher Smith	Executive Director-Development, Enterprise & Environment, GLA

Supporting officers/observers:

Phil Swann	Facilitator, Shared Intelligence
Brian Horton	Adviser, South East LEP
Richard Hatter	Strategic Planning Manager, Thurrock Council
Mark Silverman	Policy and Transport Manager, Hertsmere BC
Matthew Winslow	Strategic Planning & Housing Strategy, Basildon BC
Des Welton	Hertfordshire Planning Coordinator
John Williamson	Manager, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Joint Planning Unit
Cecilia Tredget	Director, East of England Local Government Association
Çınar Altun	Policy and Secretariat Manager, East of England LGA
Richard Linton	Strategic Planning Manager, GLA
Jorn Peters	Senior Strategic Planner, GLA
Mike Keegan	Transport for London