

Wider South East Roundtables

18 September 2015, City Hall, London

Combined Notes of 10 am and 1 pm meetings

Emerging consensus from all 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. This note summarises the final two South East sessions in September, held in London. A second Wider South East Summit on 11 December 2015 will consider the Roundtable findings and the way forward.

Attendees at all 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. Points shown in black below emerged from the first two July roundtables, and were endorsed by the September roundtables. Tracked changes refer to specific/additional points raised at the East of England session in Cambridge [on 4 Sept in red](#) and those at the [South East sessions on 18 Sept in green](#).

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, planning, [and environmental quality](#) 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. [It will be important to prioritise, with an initial focus on housing and transport.](#)

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 as necessary. It would complement not duplicate cross-boundary relationships.

3. Political mechanisms

The mechanisms should be bureaucratically light [and remain flexible](#). 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:

- there should be an inclusive annual summit, [with a clear task/purpose](#);
- the work between summits should be steered by a workable small executive. East of England, South East and London should be free to appoint their representatives in a way that suits their area, but the arrangements should be politically and geographically representative;
- there must be highly effective communication mechanisms between meetings to ensure accountability and progress;
- where appropriate steering mechanisms should be established for work on particular corridors or areas.

4. Support and resources

Consideration must be given to developing a shared and consistent data base, building on existing work and information. [It was agreed that a short note should be produced on the actions currently in hand to possibly establish a common data base and the likely timescales.](#) Any support mechanism must be light touch and build on existing arrangements. [More engagement from London beyond the Mayor is required. Opportunities to tap into resources such as those available to the Local Enterprise Partnerships outside London should be explored.](#)

NOTE OF ROUNDTABLES, MORNING AND AFTERNOON 18 SEPTEMBER

Welcome

At the 10 am morning session Sir Edward Lister (Deputy Mayor for Planning at the Greater London Authority) welcomed Roundtable participants. He reiterated London's strong population growth and the opportunities to address related challenges without impacting negatively on the wider South East (SE). Both he and Fiona Fletcher-Smith (Executive Director for Development, Enterprise & Environment at the GLA), who opened the afternoon session, also highlighted the opportunities for co-operation in particular on transport/infrastructure issues. Fiona made clear that the Mayor was keen on genuine co-operation and explained why this was important to address better the challenges the wider SE is facing.

At the morning session Cllr Paul Carter CBE (Leader of Kent County Council) joined the Deputy Mayor to welcome participants and confirmed that opportunities arising from co-operation should be embraced to address common challenges. He said that for example Kent's population was growing fast as was London's. He referred to new towns and to opportunities to unlock the development potential for example in the Thames Gateway at Ebbsfleet. However, he highlighted that the South East of England deserves a fairer share of infrastructure investment to support its growth. Joint lobbying for infrastructure would carry more weight. Cllr David Monk (Leader of Shepway District Council) joined Fiona to welcome participants in the afternoon, confirming that common challenges were arising from population and employment growth, barriers to housing delivery as well as the need to protect open space and improve infrastructure. He reiterated that South East council leaders welcomed the opportunity to discuss future collaboration.

Scene Setting

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

Outer London Commission

Will McKee, Chair of the independent Outer London Commission, explained that the Commission's investigation into wider SE relations represented the London perspective and not a separate process (for further details see the Commission's website: <http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/mayor/outer-london-commission/full-review-of-the-london-plan>). The investigation seeks to advise the Mayor and, along with the Roundtables, inform the second wider SE Summit. He highlighted that the outcome of the Roundtable meetings would also be considered by the Commissioners as part of their investigation. He indicated that the responses received to the Commission's consultation were going in the same direction as the Roundtable discussions, and he was confident that the Commission's recommendations would integrate well with the emerging consensus from the Roundtables.

Key points made by consultees to the Commission included:

- There are significant interdependencies across London's administrative borders. London and its strategic issues cannot be seen in isolation;
- Mechanisms are needed to deal with the Duty to Co-operate better;
- Focus should be on existing arrangements and 'coalition of the willing' rather than imposed structural solutions;
- Agreement on process will provide some confidence to address sensitive issues, but new structures also need to be flexible to allow them to evolve;

- There is the need for a shared/common evidence base and tangible collaboration outcomes;
- Collaboration geographies may vary depending on the issue.

Roundtable discussion

Phil Swann from Shared Intelligence independently facilitated both Roundtable discussions. There was broad support for the emerging consensus from the previous Roundtables. Building on these the following key points were discussed by participants:

Purpose/Scope

- The significant interdependencies within the wider SE were reiterated.
- The GLA confirmed that it would be in the interest of any new Mayor to put robust engagement mechanisms in place.
- The need for a shared vision beyond the mechanisms and for a shared evidence base/shared data understanding with all partners contributing was raised. This would also inform the focus of future collaboration. Officers were already in the process of scoping work towards this, and it would be discussed further at the next wider SE officer group meeting on 2nd October and inform the Summit in December.
- In terms of housing, the 2015 London Plan confirmed that London could accommodate its growth within its boundaries, but housing delivery and also affordability would be key common concerns for the new collaboration mechanism to address. In South Hampshire for example penalties for developers are considered who are not realising their schemes.
- In terms of infrastructure, other types of infrastructure beyond transport should also be covered. Some counties are preparing plans to address strategic infrastructure requirements that extend beyond their boundaries.
- Additional issues of strategic importance could also include addressing skills shortages and social infrastructure such as hospitals as well as environmental designations. Some participants called for a strategic review of the Green Belt.

Geography

- Whilst the core geographic focus should be SE/East/London-wide, some flexibility in geographies would be required to allow collaboration to work effectively.
- Consideration should be given to how best to draw on existing structures e.g. Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) or more generally on Housing Market Areas, Functional Economic Market Areas, etc.
- The importance of transport corridors was highlighted; however, not all of them would necessarily be radial, such as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

Political mechanisms

- The Summits would each need a clear purpose/task. The second Summit in December should not only agree the new arrangements but also start to consider substance and action e.g. on common issues/database.
- The Executive Steering Group should have equal representation from the East of England, South East and London. An early meeting with the new Mayor would be welcome.
- There should not only be geographical but potentially also thematic sub-groups with specific experts from relevant authorities to address e.g. urban/economic/environmental/etc. issues. Existing groupings should be used as much as possible, but they should not work in isolation.
- Effective communication between the Steering Group, any sub-groups and all authorities would be essential. The new arrangements should be flexible and not add a layer of bureaucracy to informal collaboration between individual authorities.

- Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) were outside the statutory system and had limited capacity, but they could work in collaboration with the delivery bodies help to address infrastructure/connectivity deficits.
- Potential mechanisms for how to capture and express agreed collaboration actions, e.g. in the shape of memoranda of understanding or shared narratives, would require further consideration.

Support and resources

- It would be important to use existing bodies such as SEEC and EELGA as part of any new arrangements for better wider SE engagement. However given limited resources facing all organisations, it would be important to explore how best other existing groupings such as Planning Officer Groups and Duty to Co-operate Groups could also contribute.
- The officer arrangements currently supporting wider SE collaboration in the shape of the Strategic Spatial Officer Liaison Group (SSPOLG) will have to be reviewed to meet the needs of new political mechanisms. The Group's meeting papers are available on the GLA website: <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/cross-boundary-strategic-planning-co-operation>
- More engagement from London beyond the Mayor is required, i.e. London Councils and the London boroughs.
- TfL's collaboration beyond London's boundaries is so far largely focused on transport corridors. Further engagement with the Highways Authorities, Highways England and Network Rail on wider SE issues would be valuable.
- There may be the opportunity to tap into LEP resources outside London to support collaboration. The GLA commissioned on behalf of SSPOLG an overview of the Strategic Economic Plans around London. It is available on the GLA website: <http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Item%204%20-%20SEPs%20Overview%20-%20final%20-%20revised%20post%20meeting.pdf> .

Emerging consensus and next steps

At all Roundtable sessions there was support for better engagement arrangements. The summary on pages 1/2 of this note represents the emerging consensus as identified by the independent facilitator. This will inform the second wider SE Summit on 11 December 2015, where agreement on future co-operation arrangements will be sought. The Summit will also make a start considering substance such as common issues/database. A better understanding of the process engagement opportunities in developing the full review of the London Plan and in particular its spatial options would also be welcome.

Lists of Attendees

10 am Roundtable

Facilitator:

1. Phil Swann Independent Facilitator/Shared Intelligence

Attendees:

2. Sir Edward Lister Deputy Mayor of London for Planning, GLA
3. William McKee CBE Chair, Outer London Commission
4. Geoff Hobbs Transport for London
5. Cllr Kevin Davis Leader, RB Kingston upon Thames (London Councils)
6. Cllr Carole Paternoster Cabinet Member for Growth Strategy, Aylesbury Vale DC
7. Cllr Frederick Scales Planning Committee Chairman, Dover DC
8. Cllr Neil Dallen Leader, Epsom & Ewell BC
9. Cllr Matt Furniss Lead Councillor for Infrastructure and Environment, Guildford BC
10. Cllr Paul Carter CBE Leader, Kent CC
11. Cllr Tony Page Deputy Leader, Reading BC
12. Cllr Allen Kay Deputy Leader, Reigate & Banstead BC
13. Cllr Charlotte Morley Regulatory Portfolio Holder, Surrey Heath BC
14. Cllr Ann Newton Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development, Wealden DC

Supporting Officers/Observers:

15. John Lett Strategic Planning Manager, GLA
16. Jorn Peters Senior Strategic Planner, GLA
17. Nick Woolfenden Head of Policy Co-ordination, SEEC
18. Sarah Momber Admin & Policy Officer, SEEC/SESL
19. Mark Berry Head of Place Development, Epsom & Ewell BC
20. Luci Mould Policy & Regeneration Manager, Reigate & Banstead BC
21. Jenny Rickard Executive Head – Regulatory, Surrey Heath BC

1 pm Roundtable

Facilitator:

1. Phil Swann Independent Facilitator/Shared Intelligence

Attendees:

2. Fiona Fletcher-Smith Executive Director of Development, Enterprise & Environment, GLA
3. William McKee CBE Chair, Outer London Commission
4. Peter Wright Transport for London
5. Cllr Paul Bettison Leader, Bracknell Forest Council
6. Cllr Peter Lamb Leader, Crawley BC
7. Cllr Derek Hunnisett Dartford BC
8. Cllr Andrew Kelly Cabinet Member, Elmbridge BC
9. Cllr Keith Mans Deputy Leader, Hampshire CC
10. Cllr Peter Chowney Leader, Hastings BC
11. Cllr Gail Kingerley Chair of Planning, Runnymede BC
12. Cllr David Monk Leader, Shepway DC
13. Cllr Ralph Bagge Leader, South Bucks DC
14. Cllr Simon Letts Leader, Southampton City Council
15. Cllr John Furey Cabinet Member, Surrey CC
16. Cllr David Weightman Chairman of Planning Policy, Tandridge DC
17. Cllr Martin Hatley Deputy Leader, Test Valley BC
18. Nigel Tipple Chief Executive, Oxfordshire LEP
19. Richard Harrington Chief Executive, Thames Valley Buckinghamshire LEP

Supporting Officers/Observers:

20. John Lett Strategic Planning Manager, GLA
21. Jorn Peters Senior Strategic Planner, GLA
22. Nick Woolfenden Head of Policy Co-ordination, SEEC
23. Sarah Momber Admin & Policy Officer, SEEC/SESL
24. Mark Aplin Policy Planning Manager, Dartford BC
25. Mark Behrendt Planning Policy Manager, Elmbridge BC
26. Chris Murray Head of Strategic Planning, Hampshire CC
27. Richard Ford Policy and Strategy Manager, Runnymede BC
28. Sue Janota Spatial Planning and Policy Manager, Surrey CC
29. Gloria Ighodaro Executive Director, PUSH