



FULL MEETING : 13 MARCH 2008

REPORT OF THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR  
(Agenda Item6)

**Progress Report March 2008**  
**Our Business Objectives – Action Plan**  
**2007 – 2010**

**1. Transforming our business**

What and Why?	Progress	Due	Done
<p><b>We will:</b></p> <p>i) review and strengthen SEE committee structures and our business functions. This will maximise our resources, increase the effectiveness and responsiveness of our organisation, and the quality of service we provide.</p> <p>ii) consolidate a small core team of specialist Partner Consultants. This will provide proactive, flexible support to our customers, and will ensure consistency in our quality assurance processes.</p> <p>iii) optimise our fixed costs and assets by expanding our business activities and consultancy services. We</p>	<p><b>We have:</b></p> <p>i) consolidated the overview and scrutiny mechanism into our business planning process through our Executive Committee. The role of our members is enhanced and they are proactively engaged with developing our business initiatives and raising the profile of SEE with member councils. Examples include raising awareness of Dispute Resolution procedure, training for members in appeals process, workforce strategy development, Local Government Pension Scheme changes.</p> <p>ii) established a small core group of specialist consultants to complement our internal expertise or capacity. This particularly relates to specialist areas of equal pay and job evaluation reviews and projects for Fire and Rescue Services.</p> <p>iii) used a Public Relations Consultant to support us in developing our Communications Strategy. We have expanded our services to</p>	<p>7/07</p> <p>10/07</p> <p>9/07</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>

<p>will increase our customer base from across the public, voluntary and not-for profit sector, and other supporting agencies and organisations. This will raise our profile as a regional employers organisation and generate increased cash flow to strengthen our financial viability, ensure we are self-funding and enable us to re- invest in our services.</p>	<p>include Fire and Rescue services within and outside our region, providing expertise in the firefighter recruitment sifting process and assessment and development centres. We are working with the Fire Service College to develop this further on a national level. Work to develop our business activities and consultancy services will be on-going.</p>		
<p>iv) build our research and information database and facilities to support our customers in sharing information and benchmarking. This will contribute to achieving efficiencies for our individual councils and providing timely and accurate management information for learning and benchmarking.</p>	<p>iv) developed a positive working arrangement with the National Association of Regional Employers (NARE). Examples of shared working are building our expertise in research and surveys to enable greater benchmarking and sharing of statistical data across regions. Our first was the Chief Executive / Chief Officer survey circulated to our Councils in November 2007. The development of this shared research and survey facility will be on-going.</p>	9/07	✓
<p>v) improve access to our services through a new design website that focuses on identified customer needs. We will develop and host additional portals as required. This will provide a central source of accessible information to and from all our customer groups.</p>	<p>We continue to work on building a robust database on our website to provide accessible and meaningful information for our customers.</p> <p>v) completed initial updates to SEE website. However, further modifications are to be made to accommodate additional portals, including graphic design and web-based IT support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress through Partnerships (PtP)</li> <li>• SEE Jobs</li> <li>• Shared Management Information and data</li> <li>• Shared e-Training</li> </ul>	6/08	
<p>vi) overhaul our communications and information flow processes. This will ensure we are reaching our customers effectively and that our ICT is fully utilised and our INTRANET is fit for purpose.</p>	<p>vi) commenced refining our INTRANET – and this work is on-going as requires a major overhaul and is time-intensive.</p>	6/07 4/08 6/08 3/10	✓
<p>vii) promote an Environmentally-friendly approach to conducting our business as part of our social responsibility.</p>	<p>vii) developed and published our Environmental Policy.</p>	7/08	
<p>viii) optimise the use of our assets to generate</p>	<p>viii) designed and circulated promotional literature for our Training</p>	7/07	✓
		4/08	

additional income and offset some building / accommodation costs through increased hires of our training room at Newfrith House.	Room and we are making greater use of this resource for our increasing number of networking meetings we facilitate. There is further promotional work to be done to fully utilise this resource. Our target is to increase usage by 10% year on year.	4/09 4/10	
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## 2. Implementing a robust financial strategy

What and Why?	Progress	Due	Done
<b>We will:</b>	<b>We have:</b>		
i) implement a three year financial strategy to take account of the increasing constraints and changing opportunities for income generation. This will provide a plan to reduce the Reserves Account, but increase income to create a balanced budget. This will provide a robust basis for informed financial planning, forecasting and decision making	i) presented our three year financial strategy 2007-10 to the Management Committee in December 2007. This was approved and will be updated annually to align with the 3 year Business Plan. We believe we will achieve our target of a balanced budget by 2009/10.	12/07	✓
ii) establish separate budget accounts for Employment Services and Improvement & Governance. This will enable us to audit our costs, expenditure and income targets year on year. This will take account of developmental costs for new projects and staff training.	ii) established separate team and individual fee-earning or activity targets. These contribute to the overall income figure we expect to achieve to meet our expenditure and offset and balance our deficit figure. This recognises individual and team development needs, new skills acquisition and the cost of developing new initiatives.	9/07	✓
iii) refine our charging structure and membership banding and fees. This will take account of the future cost of providing services to our members, additional services we might offer, and any future work we may be asked to undertake on behalf of the Improvement and Development Agency /Local Government Employers at a regional level. This is in light of the 'Joan Jones review' and the cessation of subscriptions from IDeA and LGE from 2008.	iii) reviewed our charging structure as part of our Financial Strategy. This was presented to, and approved by, the Management Committee in December 2007. Our additional value-adding initiatives to our councils over this year as part of their subscriptions – 'free at the point of delivery', have been well received, and include such activities as developing new networks for Childrens and Adult Services, Democratic Services Officers, Charter for member development.	12/07	✓
iv) refine our team and individual income targets and our rates for consultancy work and events. This will support our objective to reduce the current deficit, and	iv) established unique project codes to review and allocate costs and income targets against each Business Unit. This will contribute to a clear financial recording mechanism. This is included in our Financial	9/07	✓

<p>will be the basis for estimating our income earning potential against expenditure. This will be the basis against which performance is measured and any bonus is calculated, and how annual income targets are set.</p>	<p>Strategy. Further, a business case is made for new business initiatives requiring funding, to be approved by the Management Committee.</p>		
<p>v) establish an annual budget for long term strategies, including marketing and website development; staff training and development; research and development.</p>	<p>v) allocated appropriate budget headings and identified finances to improve our financial planning. This to be reviewed annually.</p>	9/07	✓
<p>vi) develop financial procedures to support new business initiatives. This will ensure robust financial management to support our business requirements, ensure audit compliance particularly relating to external funding.</p>	<p>vi) worked with funding bodies to confirm our compliance with their requirements and have the new SAGE system fully utilised. We have provided advance training for our Business Support Manager and colleagues from Winchester City Council Financial Services to support this.</p>	7/07	✓

### 3. Improving the performance of our organisation

What and Why?	Progress	Due	Done
<p><b>We will:</b></p> <p>i) review and update our internal policies and procedures. This will support good employment practices, minimise the risk of accident or injury, maintain high attendance levels and enable us to recruit and retain high quality staff to ensure business continuity.</p> <p>ii) review job descriptions against revised job profiles following the outcome of job evaluation. This will ensure that any revised duties and responsibilities of the post are accurately reflected in the job description and the grade of the post.</p>	<p><b>We have:</b></p> <p>i) consulted our staff and implemented policies on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• job grading</li> <li>• training and development</li> <li>• attendance management</li> <li>• grievance procedure</li> <li>• disciplinary procedure</li> <li>• capability procedure</li> <li>• Equalities policy and Action Plan</li> </ul> <p>ii) reviewed job descriptions to ensure they are an accurate reflection of the duties and responsibilities of all posts. Job evaluation of two newly created temporary posts relating to Progress through Partnership (PtP) will be finalised and grades confirmed by end March 2008.</p>	<p>5/07</p> <p>9/07</p> <p>10/07</p> <p>12/07</p> <p>12/07</p> <p>12/07</p> <p>12/07</p> <p>1/08</p> <p>12/07</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>

<p>iii) introduce a robust performance management system to support a culture of high performance and ensure continuous professional development for all our staff.</p>	<p>iii) developed a performance management system to provide a process of continuous review and evaluation. This is in place with two appraisals per year and a mechanism to review performance / outputs against defined financial and activity targets.</p>	9/07	✓
<p>iv) implement a development programme for all our staff, as individuals or as part of a team, to support their continuous development. All our staff will maintain records of development and evidence how this impacts on their performance at work</p>	<p>iv) identified an annual budget for staff training and development to fund identified development needs that link to and enhance organisational objectives. Training needs are identified through the appraisal process or as part of new skills identified to develop new business areas.</p>	4/07	✓
<p>v) review our appraisal process and implement the new system. This will ensure staff are clear about how their performance contributes to the business outcomes and success of the organisation and any gaps are identified and development needs supported.</p>	<p>v) established our revised appraisal process. The team is familiar with the process and this takes place twice a year.</p>	8/07	✓
<p>vi) implement actions following our staff survey to address any shortcomings in our organisational performance and action suggestions for improvement. This will assist us in evaluating our activities and communications.</p>	<p>vi) conducted a Perception Gap Survey in January 2007. This did not fully meet our needs, although some useful information was gained and acted upon. We have now implemented a 'suggestion scheme' through the team meetings.</p>	3/08	✓
<p>vii) consolidate our Quality Assurance processes to ensure that the services we provide meet our customers' needs and remain at a high quality and are competitively priced.</p>	<p>vii) we will commission an external agency to carry out an audit of customer perception, and to provide a feedback report to SEE. We recently underwent a further quality assurance review by the IDeA to ensure our standards of assessment of the Member Charter were maintained. This was very successful.</p>	4/09 11/07	✓

#### 4. Building our value-added support and consultancy services

What and Why?	Progress	Due	Done
<p><b>We will:</b></p> <p>i) build a shared e-Recruitment portal for the region to generate savings for our partners, improve service delivery to candidates, and raise the profile of councils</p>	<p><b>We have:</b></p> <p>i) secured agreement from the Management Committee for funding from reserves to build a shared portal to link to each Council's vacancy website, or jobs portal site. This will be provided to councils</p>	4/08	

<p>and partners as employers of choice. This will include developing a 'back office function' as stage two of the project.</p>	<p>at no cost through their membership of SEE. We will not be developing a back office function as this is not a requirement of our councils. Work is underway to build this and create the graphics to be added to SEE website – SEE Jobs.</p>		
<p>ii) establish a shared service recruitment and assessment centre facility providing shortlisting, recruitment, assessment and development centre services. This will increase cost-savings to our customers and add value to our services.</p>	<p>i) developed our knowledge and expertise in the national firefighter recruitment and assessment &amp; development processes. Our customer base is growing. We have trained assessors at Supervisory, Middle and Strategic Management level. SEE has provided an assessor for a Strategic Manager ADC in the W Midlands and Lancashire, and continues to work closely with the Fire Service College to further develop our expertise and work in this area.</p>	12/07	✓
<p>iii) establish a shared e-Training portal for the region to generate savings for our partners and make the most efficient use of our collective resources</p>	<p>iii) discussed with South East Centre of Excellence opportunity to support a regional portal on behalf of our region. This is longer-term.</p>	3/10	
<p>iv) develop and deliver a regional forum to assist our councils to deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• organisational change, leadership capacity, management development, workforce development, resourcing solutions, pay and rewards strategies, and build HR capacity.</li> </ul>	<p>iv) established and facilitated small task and finish groups to share best practice and experiences across the region, through our Strategic HR Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational Development</li> <li>• Pay &amp; Workforce Strategy</li> <li>• Equality &amp; Diversity</li> <li>• Policy development</li> <li>• European Working</li> </ul>	9/07	<p>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</p>
<p>This will contribute towards shared services and efficient use of resources.</p>			
<p>v) commence the Certificate in Local Governance for councillors. This will incorporate feedback gained from the pilot to improve the course for the benefit of our councillors</p>	<p>v) filled our allocated places for the pilot and this commenced in February 2008. Funding was secured from the SE Regional Improvement and Efficiency Board to support these places.</p>	1/08	✓
<p>vi) facilitate all our councils to commit, and sign up to, the South East Charter for Councillor Development. This will enable councillors to engage in their own development, support the retention of councillors and create a culture of encouraging new councillors with talent to engage in local democracy.</p>	<p>vi) supported councils in engaging with the Charter through the development of a Charter Network group. The first meeting took place in February and was well attended. There is interest from N. Ireland in building a similar framework for their councillor development. 20 Councils in the SE have signed up to, or have been awarded the Charter. Successful councils to date are Bracknell</p>	4/09 4/08	

<p>vii) establish <b>SEE</b> as the key regional driver for managing and supporting scrutiny processes. This will assist in supporting effective political management and decision-making processes.</p> <p>viii) develop <b>SEE</b> as the south east regional 'hub' for local and strategic partnerships. This will provide support to, and develop the capacity of, partnerships to sustain the programme of 'Progress through Partnerships'.</p> <p>ix) become the recognised professional body for Democratic Services Officers. This will fill an identified 'gap' as there is no professional body currently in place. Further, this will raise the profile of effective governance as a key driver of local government improvement</p> <p>x) establish a programme of employment-related workshops for our member organisations as part of their membership to make sure our HR professionals are properly supported and SEE demonstrates added value</p> <p>xi) create a European working party to evaluate and comment on draft new labour laws. This will promote the SE region as a collective and influential voice in the development of European employment legislation as it impacts on UK law, and will provide developmental opportunities for our customers.</p>	<p>Forest, Spelthorne, E Sussex, Elmbridge, Isle of Wight, Woking. SEE is supporting 14 Councils in East of England, and 2 have achieved Charter Status. We aim to achieve commitment of all our Councils in SE region.</p> <p>vii) developed the knowledge and expertise of our staff to support Councils with best practice in effective scrutiny and accountability to ensure we maintain a lead around policy development working with key partner organisations. This will be on-going.</p> <p>viii) built the PtP Website, linked to the SEE website. This expands on the current programme to create value added products and services to support strategic partnerships with up to date information, research and development and website development.</p> <p>ix) established ourselves as a central hub to support, networks, shared learning and dialogue through building on our existing democratic services officers and scrutiny networks. Successful Enhancing Local Democracy seminar held in London June 2007.</p> <p>x) established a rolling programme to deliver workshops on site to our council members as part of their membership with SEE. These have been very successful and were well-received. A programme of training for Councillors involved in appeals hearings has been well-received and is expanding.</p> <p>xi) facilitated HR professionals from the HR Strategic Board to become a 'virtual' focus group to receive and consider CEEP information. SEE collates responses and sends a collective SE regional response to our European partners.</p>	<p>4/09</p> <p>9/07</p> <p>9/07</p> <p>9/07</p> <p>3/08</p> <p>7/07</p>	<p></p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
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**Jennifer McNeill**  
**Regional Director**  
**March 2008**