



**MINUTES OF THE FULL MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY 13 MARCH 2008
AT THE MOTHERS' UNION, MARY SUMNER HOUSE,
TUFTON STREET, LONDON**

PRESENT:

Arun District Council	Cllr Terence Chapman
Bracknell Forest Borough Council	Cllr Bob Edger OBE
Bracknell Forest Borough Council	Cllr Ian Leake
Buckinghamshire County Council	Cllr Mike Appleyard
Canterbury City Council	Cllr R Flaherty
Crawley Borough Council	Cllr Richard Burrett
East Hampshire District Council	Cllr Ken Moon
East Sussex County Council	Cllr Roy Martin
East Sussex County Council	Cllr Michael Tunwell
Hampshire County Council	Cllr Dr Ray Ellis
Hastings Borough Council	Cllr Joy Waite
Havant Borough Council	Cllr Marjorie Smallcorn
Isle of Wight Council	Cllr David Whittaker
Milton Keynes Council	Cllr Gladstone McKenzie (SD)
New Forest District Council	Cllr Maureen Holding
Oxfordshire County Council	Cllr Denis Roaf (SD)
Oxfordshire County Council	Cllr David Wilmshurst
Rother District Council	Cllr Robin Patten
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead	Cllr Dave Mackay
Rushmoor Borough Council	Cllr Paul Taylor
Shepway District Council	Cllr Rory Love
Slough Borough Council	Cllr B Hewitt
Southampton City Council	Cllr Dennis Harryman
Spelthorne Borough Council	Cllr Richard Smith-Ainsley
Surrey County Council	Cllr David Harmer (SD)
Surrey County Council	Cllr Nigel Petrie MBE
Swale Borough Council	Cllr Mike Cosgrove
Test Valley Borough Council	Cllr Neville Whiteley
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council	Cllr Mike Dobson
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	Cllr Stanley Ward
Vale of White Horse District Council	Cllr Patrick Lonergan
West Berkshire Council	Cllr O Jeffery
West Sussex County Council	Cllr Morwen Millson
West Sussex County Council	Cllr Clive Williams
Wokingham Borough Council	Cllr Malcolm Bryant
Wokingham Borough Council	Cllr Rob Stanton
Wycombe District Council	Cllr Jeanette Mann

In Attendance:

Jennifer McNeill	Regional Director	South East Employers
Mark Palmer	Head of Improvement & Governance	South East Employers
Oliver Woodman	Head of Employment Services	South East Employers
Alexis Garlick	Treasurer	South East Employers
Martin Rutherford	Treasurer Designate	South East Employers

Officers in attendance:

Jill Slater	Hampshire County Council
Paul Royel	Kent County Council
Dena Smart	Maidstone Borough Council
Tricia Palmer	Medway Council
Richard Mills	Surrey County Council
Richard Jefferys	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Sally Barnaby	West Sussex County Council

1.0 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from:

Authority	Name
Arun District Council	Cllr D Wilde (SD)
Ashford Borough Council	Cllr P W Bartlett (SD)
Aylesbury Vale District Council	Cllr J Cartwright
Aylesbury Vale District Council	Cllr S Lambert (SD)
Aylesbury Vale District Council	Cllr Mrs P Pearce
Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council	Cllr K Rhatigan
Brighton & Hove City Council	Cllr M Marsh
Brighton & Hove City Council	Cllr B Pidgeon
Brighton & Hove City Council	Cllr D Simson
Buckinghamshire County Council	Cllr M Tett
Dover District Council	Cllr T Bartlett
Eastbourne Borough Council	Cllr S Morris
East Hampshire District Council	Cllr M Johnson MBE (SD)
Eastleigh Borough Council	Cllr K House
Fareham Borough Council	Cllr T M Cartwright
Gosport Borough Council	Cllr D Wright
Gravesham Borough Council	Cllr D Turner
Hampshire County Council	Cllr R Bauk
Hampshire County Council	Cllr G Hockley
Horsham District Council	Cllr Mrs C Vickers
Isle of Wight Council	Cllr G Lumley
Isle of Wight Council	Cllr J Wood
Milton Keynes Council	Cllr R Edwards
Oxford City Council	Cllr J Goddard
Oxfordshire County Council	Cllr R Rose
Portsmouth City Council	Cllr A Thompson
Reading Borough Council	Cllr J Lovelock
Reigate & Banstead Borough Council	Cllr A Mounthey (SD)
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead	Cllr D McBride
Sevenoaks District Council	Cllr S Arnold
Slough Borough Council	Cllr L Khan
South Bucks District Council	Cllr Mrs J Simmonds
Spelthorne Borough Council	Cllr S Bhadye (SD)

Surrey County Council
Wealden District Council
Wealden District Council
West Berkshire Council
Winchester City Council

Cllr I R Lake
Cllr N Buck
Cllr Mrs C Dowling (SD)
Cllr A Linden
Cllr S Godfrey

2.0 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

2.1 The minutes of the Full Meeting held on 15 November 2007 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

2.2 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

2.3 Minutes of the following meetings:

2.3.1 The Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting held on 5 December 2007 were noted

2.3.2 Matters arising

Agenda Item 8 – ‘Enhancing Local Democracy Conference’ 2008
Cllr Neville Whiteley, Test Valley Borough Council pointed out that, although last year’s conference had been excellent, many attendees were from outside our region, e.g. London Boroughs, East and South West regions. He hoped that more members and officers from the South East region would support this year’s conference and attend personally as well as encourage attendance of their Democratic Services Officers.

2.3.3 The Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 17 January 2008 were noted

2.3.4 There were no matters arising.

3.0 SOUTH EAST EMPLOYERS’ BUSINESS PLAN 2008/2011

The Regional Director presented the updated 3 year ‘rolling’ Business Plan that continues to build on our achievements over the last year. Our vision remains that we are the first choice provider for our councils and the smaller organisations that rely on us for support.

Questions and comments were invited which included the following:

Q: On Page 6, people might not immediately recognise those listed as “Partners”.

A: *We will try to widen the list.*

Q: The Foreword at the front of the Business Plan reminds us that we are Member lead so perhaps it should be signed by the Chairman as well as the Regional Director.

A: *We will do this*

Other comments included:

⇒ Praise should be given to Mark Palmer for the work he is doing for councillors and particularly the new university qualification for councillors.

⇒ It is good to see that members’ comments have been taken into account when drafting the Business Plan.

The Chairman congratulated the Regional Director and the Team for putting together such a good Business Plan.

The Business Plan was approved by the Members.

4.0 REVISED ESTIMATES 2007/2008 AND INITIAL BUDGET 2008/2009

Alexis Garlick, Treasurer introduced Martin Rutherford who had joined Winchester City Council as a result of their re-structure and would take over as Treasurer for SEE at the Annual Meeting in July.

The Treasurer was pleased to report that the latest revised estimates for 2007/2008, showed an improved position with a forecast deficit of £12,205 compared to the original estimate of a deficit of £36,299.

The Initial Proposed Budget for 2008/2009 had been prepared, with the agreement of the Management and Executive Committees, that 100% of previous funding from LGE, and 50% of previous funding from IDeA would be retained. Estimates were also provided for income and expenditure for the two years subsequent to 2008/2009 as part of our 3 year Financial Strategy.

Questions/comments were then invited which included the following:

Q: Does the figure given for Office Accommodation include the letting of the Training Room at Newfrith House?

A: *The Regional Director advised that income from the hiring of the Training Room is included in Training Income and not Office Accommodation.*

Q: Why is there such a big reduction in "Employers Expenses"?

A: *The Chairman advised that, in the past, SEE had reimbursed Members for their expenses incurred when attending Committee meetings. Members are now encouraged to claim their expenses from their councils – the same procedure as used by the LGA. However, we have asked that if there is any difficulty within the council, they should let us know as we would not want it to prohibit them from attending meetings. A SERC Joint Seminar had also been cancelled which would have saved extra expenditure.*

The Revised Estimates for 2007/2008 and the Initial Estimates for 2008/2009 were approved by Members.

5.0 STAFFING UPDATE

Members received a report from the Regional Director on the current staffing situation and advised that advertisements would shortly be posted for the Head of Employment Services and HR Business Partner vacancies.

The Chairman paid tribute to Oliver Woodman who will be retiring on 31 March and thanked him for his contribution to SEE and the courtesy he has always shown to him.

Questions/comments were then invited which included the following:

Q: Is there sufficient in the budget to get the right people for these jobs and are we paying the right salary?

A: *The Regional Director confirmed that, whenever there is a vacancy, we review Job Descriptions and salary level. Where there is a shortage in a particular skill,*

there is always competition and salaries go up. Good HR professionals are hard to find and at SEE we need people with a high level of knowledge and expertise as they are giving advice to councils.

Members noted the report.

6. REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Members received a report from the Regional Director on the main activities and achievements SEE together with targets for the coming year. This had been laid out in a similar format to the Action Plan that supports the Business Plan so that Members can monitor progress.

Questions/comments were then invited which included the following:

Q: Year on year councils are asked to justify their expenditure and councillors are not aware of how SEE justifies the level of subscription when sending their invoice to councils. It would be helpful for SEE representatives to receive copies of this information.

A: *The Chairman confirmed that this information is contained in the Business Plan and on the SEE website. However, we must ensure that new members are updated – in addition to the induction at the Annual Meeting. The Regional Director agreed to copy councillors into this correspondence.*

Q: Does the Regional Director visit councils and if so, could the SEE representatives be advised?

A: *The Regional Director advised that she has a programme of visits to Chief Executives and Heads of HR which are very valuable. However, the region is large and takes time to cover. The Regional Director agreed to inform councillor representatives of future visits.*

Q: Pleased to see that SEEJobs is due to be launched in April 2008 – is this on time? It was agreed at the Management Committee that a letter would go to Chief Executives about this with a copy to Members. Has this been sent?

A: *The Regional Director advised that the graphics to create the new site has taken longer than originally planned. However, the letter to Chief Executives will be going out shortly.*

Q: What is the current position with the Temp Agency (SEETemps)?

A: *The Regional Director advised that this was on the “back burner” due to the time taken for the setting up of SEEJobs. Also, our potential market is limited as many councils in our area are tied into long-term contracts for the procurement of temporary workers with large private sector firms. We will continue to explore our options here.*

Q: Is your Environmental Policy available?

A: *It is live and on the SEE website.*

Q: On Page 2 Item viii) it states that you will “optimise the use of our assets to generate additional income by 10% year of year. Is this on course?

A: *The Regional Director advised that this referred to the hiring of our Training Room. She did not have the figures on the usage to hand but would send the councillor an email.*

Members noted the report.

7.0 EMPLOYMENT SERVICES REPORT

Members received an update report produced by Oliver Woodman about progress on key activities contributing to the Business Plan from the Employment Services Team. This, together with the Members' Briefing Note (INFO 1), brings Members up to date with the latest legislation. He also paid tribute to Malcolm Lee who has been carrying out Equal Pay Exercises across the region for the past 2 – 3 years and to John Anslow for his work with SEE on Employment Law seminars.

The report was received by Members.

8.0 IMPROVEMENT AND GOVERNANCE REPORT

The Head of Improvement and Governance presented a report updating members about progress on key activities contributing to the Business Plan from the Improvement and Governance Team. He reported that:

- ⇒ Discussions are already taking place about how we are going to continue and implement a further year of the Certificate in Local Governance. He was pleased to report that the North West Employers Organisation is replicating our model with a university in the NW region.
- ⇒ The initial PtP contract draws to a close at the end of March but we have had approval for funding for staffing for a further six months and informal confirmation that the contract will be extended for a further year until 31.03.09. We are currently putting together our programme of activities for the coming year.
- ⇒ Congratulations to Woking DC and Isle of Wight Council on achieving the Charter. Assessments for Medway Council and Rother District Council are imminent. Surrey Police are the first Police Authority in the South East to sign up (only the 2nd in the country). Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service has expressed interest in signing up to the Charter. We are now developing Charter Plus based on the Councillors' Commission report.
- ⇒ As a result of the Scrutiny and Accountability Project with Southampton City Council, we are putting a model for effective scrutiny partnership together and the Communities and Local Government want to use the evidence from this.
- ⇒ Appendix 1 contained an update on the South Coast Planning Skills Pathway Initiative. SEE had identified a skills gap and had secured funding to provide a local source of training and qualifications for planners in the south east region. Members would be kept updated on progress with this project.

Questions/comments were then invited which included the following together with responses from the Head of Improvement and Governance:

Q: The situation is even worse with Environmental Health Officers – could we do a similar thing with them?

A: *We are in discussion with RTPI about this and anticipate that they will be supportive.*

Q: Interest in the work with Southampton CC – is this confidential or could we have access to the report?

A: *At the moment it is confidential but Southampton City Council are prepared to develop it into a case study which will go on the PtP and IDeA websites. They are also interested in doing another pilot in a 2-tier area but something in terms of a multi-area agreement.*

Q: Regarding the Post Graduate Certificate, there is an implication that the councillor should have already graduated on something.

A: *They do not require any formal qualification beforehand.*

The report was received by Members.

INFORMATION ITEMS INFO 1, INFO 2 AND INFO 3 WERE NOTED.

11.0 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next Full Meeting of South East Employers would be the Annual Meeting which will take place at Bankside House, London School of Economics, London, on Thursday 10 July 2008.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYERS / SOUTH EAST EMPLOYERS PAY ROADSHOW

Phil White, Local Government Employers (LGE) made a presentation (copy to be found on SEE website at: [link to be added](#)) and asked Members/Officers present to consider the following options for 3 year deal:

1. Just a one year pay deal with no conditions attached.
 - Perhaps reform is just too difficult in tight economic context
2. Attempt to achieve major strategic reform of conditions in a “big bang” as part of a three year deal
3. Begin to address the reform agenda with clear signal that 2008 deal is the first part of a process
 - We might want changes to premium payments and sick pay and reform of negotiating machinery in return for improvements to annual leave, maternity and paternity, for example

Phil White advised that feedback had been consistent amongst the previous 10 Pay Roadshows held across the country and the clear message was that there is a desire for reform of the National Agreement. However, it is becoming evident that it will be difficult to achieve a 3-year deal with the Trade Unions. The trend with most of the regions around the country seems to be support for reaching an agreement with the Trade Unions now with a timetable for the reform process to be completed by the end of 2008, linking to a pay settlement for 2009/2010, i.e. 1 year plus 2 years – **not** a 3-year deal.

Prior to the meeting Members/Officers were asked to consider the following key questions and these were discussed at the meeting:

- What is in your authority’s budget for pay increases in 2008?
- Which of the three options for 2008 would you like us to pursue?
- Would you be prepared to accept an element of bottom-loading to achieve a deal?

- Would you like us to attempt to negotiate the abolition of the JNC for Craft Workers or other JNCs as a priority?

Responses were as follows:

Of the three options for 2008 which would you like us to pursue?

A majority of those present preferred Option 3, i.e. a quick one-year deal followed by 2 years but not to lose the link to reform.

Would you be prepared to accept an element of bottom-loading to achieve a deal?

There were differing views on this with views including:

- ⇒ A small element of this had been agreed last year but to agree too much could disrupt pay scales.
- ⇒ Could be persuaded to accept this as long as the total did not exceed RPA.
- ⇒ Opposed to bottom loading as it will disrupt the JE exercise just completed.

Would you like us to attempt to negotiate the abolition of the JNC for Craft Workers or other JNCs as a priority?

Phil White was asked if the LGE's objective is to arrive at a "single bargaining table". The number of authorities retaining craft workers is relatively small but the craft workers' group is very important to their industrial relations. He was also asked if there is still a proposal to have a completely separate NJC for Children's Services workforce.

Phil's answer was that there are proposals from Government to set up a separate bargaining machinery for school support staff. Jim Knight, Minister for Schools has set out a timetable for this to be in place in September 2008 but LGA/LGE have made representations to ministers with concerns about these developments. He believes the Government is determined it will happen but they need to give authorities time to prepare. It is therefore unlikely it will happen by September 2008.