

ITEM 4
RURAL AFFAIRS
CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY
17 JUNE 1999

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY - RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To report on the establishment of a Rural Development Committee within the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA).
- 1.2 To note the content of a draft document 'A Strategic Local Authority View of Rural Development in the South East'.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The Regional Development Agencies Act became law in November 1998 which led to the establishment of eight new Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). These RDAs are Non-Departmental Government Bodies with boards appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions. Milton Keynes comes within the South East region. The Development Agency for this region, SEEDA, has new premises in Guildford and officially commenced its functions on 1 April 1999.
- 2.2 At its first meeting the SEEDA Board decided to set up 14 task groups, each led by a Board Member. One of these task groups relates to Rural Development and is led by Sarah Ward OBE.
- 2.3 The SEEDA Rural Development Board Committee has now met on a couple of occasions, a copy of the minutes of its first meeting, together with its draft terms of reference, are attached at **Annex A** for information. It is likely that the Committee will wish to consult on a number of rural issues in the future. These issues will be submitted to this Assembly for comment.
- 2.4 In addition, officers of local authorities within the South East region agreed that a document should be written for SEEDA that could inform their rural agenda. The central aim of the document is to enable the region's strategic local authorities to retain an

influential voice on rural issues, explain the distinctiveness of particular areas and perhaps more importantly, demonstrate a willingness to adopt a strategic regional approach to rural development. The document, in draft form, is attached at **Annex B**. Unfortunately, Milton Keynes Council, along with a number of other unitary authorities were not involved in this process although we have been invited to attend future meetings of the officer Group. The final version of the document has now been submitted to SEEDA and no further work is proposed on this document at the present time.

- 2.5 The Consultative Assembly is invited to receive the document at this stage. Should further work be undertaken at a later date the Assembly will be invited to comment.

3. **Recommendations**

- 3.1 This report is for information only.

Background Papers: None