

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

Date: 9 December 2011

Subject: **Data Dashboard: Key Issues in the South East**

Report by: Nick Woolfenden, Head of Policy Co-ordination



Recommendations:

SEEC Executive members are asked to:

- i) Discuss and agree key findings from the December update of SEEC's Data Dashboard (overview pages attached).
- ii) Agree that SEEC should send the final Dashboard to MPs, emphasising key findings that reinforce the need for continued investment and a fair policy environment to address South East needs.

1. Background

1.1 SEEC published its first Data Dashboard in July 2011, which is publicly available on SEEC's website¹. The Dashboard draws on a range of data to highlight key issues facing the South East on six topics², also providing local data where available.

1.2 We have received positive feedback on the first edition. As agreed at SEEC's AGM following advice from a member-led Task Group, chaired by Cllr Mike Appleyard, we will update the Dashboard no more than three times a year, reflecting resource constraints and timing of official data releases. This will include an update to the full SEEC membership at the AGM each year. Updates will help identify specific issues that SEEC members may wish to raise with government or other decision makers – either collectively for the South East or locally using authority-level data.

1.3 The draft of the first Dashboard update (December 2011) is now complete. Overview pages for each topic are attached (Annex 1). Members' comments are invited so key messages can be agreed prior to full Dashboard publication. Hard copies of the full 45 page Dashboard will be available at Executive on 9 December and published online after member approval.

1.4 As well as being circulated to SEEC members and published online, we propose sending the Dashboard overview to MPs, emphasising key issues facing the South East and our need for a fair approach to policy and investment.

2. Key issues

2.1 While at a high level the South East appears to perform relatively well on a number of issues, there are significant challenges that must be addressed

¹ <http://www.secouncils.gov.uk/page/4/view/26/seec-data-dashboard>

² These are: A) Economy & Employment; B) Housing & Infrastructure; C) Public Finance & Grants; D) Demography; E) Migration; F) Environment

though investment and policy. In particular the South East's large population and significant scale of deprivation need to be recognised.

2.2 Based on the latest Dashboard data, we recommend the following issues are highlighted - members' views are invited on these or any other issues.

A) Economy and Employment

- Reflecting the national picture, the number of unemployment claimants in the South East increased over the last year to around 140,000 – many analyses hide this significant number by looking at percentages rather than actual numbers.
- Unemployment levels for under-25s are a concern, being above national average in 11 Districts/Unitaries. This reflects national trends with record levels not in employment, education or training (NEETs).
- The South East saw a large fall in job density (number of jobs per resident in an area) from 2008-09, equating to a loss of 93,000 jobs.
- GVA (economic output) per head in the South East fell between 2008-09, to only just above the national average; looking at total GVA hides this, giving the impression of stronger performance.
- Over 450,000 South East residents still have no qualifications, a problem that is masked by only looking at percentages.
- *There is a strong message that the South East's economic success cannot be taken for granted and appropriate policy and investment is required.*

B) Housing and Infrastructure

- The South East built the most homes in England at 19,500 (private & affordable combined), but completions continue to drop steeply with nearly 4,000 less built in 2010/11 than 2009/10. The drop in affordable housing is of particular concern.
- Overall the South East has the second highest New Homes Bonus allocation (£34m). This reflects the relatively high levels of development compared to elsewhere in England, although individual local authority allocations vary considerably.
- At £257 per head, the South East has the lowest levels of capital funding per resident, £155 below the national average, despite significant pressure on services and infrastructure.
- More positively, provisional allocations of the Government's new Growing Places Fund for infrastructure better reflect the absolute scale of need in the South East, as emphasised previously by SEEC.
- *Overall there remains need for significant funding to address affordable housing and infrastructure needs in the South East to ensure economic success.*

C) Public Finance and Grants

- South East authorities receive the lowest average central government formula grant per head, at just £374 in 2011/12, some £185 below national average.
- 5 of 19 South East bids to Round 2 of the Regional Growth Fund were approved – an improvement from just 1 under Round 1, and a better reflection of South East needs and opportunities as emphasised by SEEC.
- At £23.7m over 6 years, the South East received the lowest amount of European Regional Development Funds in England – less than 1% of the national pot.

- *There is a need for fairer levels of central government and European funding in the South East to drive economic recovery and reflect our large population.*

D) Demography

- At over 8.5m people, the South East has the largest population in England, and is projected to grow by 1.3m over the next 20 years.
- At least 50% increase is expected in the number of older people in the South East over the next 20 years, well above national average.
- The South East has also seen a relative increase in the number of people living in deprived areas between 2007-2010 compared to other parts of England. We have 565,000 people in areas classified in the 20% most deprived in the country.
- *Continued investment and action is needed to address both the challenges of population change and long-term areas of deprivation.*

E) Migration

- Although hard to estimate exact numbers due to official data limitations, there are indications that net international migration has significantly increased in the South East to England's highest, following a small reduction the previous year.
- The distribution of immigrants and their impact on services and resources needs varied considerably across different parts of the South East.
- Internal migration levels (ie people moving within the UK) are also high in the South East, placing additional demands on services and infrastructure.
- *Time lags and limitations in official data (for example there is no National Insurance de-registering process to remove economically inactive migrants or those who leave the country) must be addressed by government so local needs and central funding requirements can be better addressed.*

F) Environment

- As the most populated area in England, the South East produces the greatest amount of household and municipal waste.
- Levels of household waste reduced over the last year, albeit at a slower rate than recent years; municipal waste levels remained static over the last year, following significant reductions during the preceding two years.
- Household recycling rates have increased positively, from 36% to over 41% over the last 4 years, staying just ahead of national average recycling rates.
- During the same period, municipal waste sent to landfill fell from 51% to 33%, continuing to do better than the national average.
- *Overall whilst some of the trends are positive, there is a need for continued effort and investment to address the significant levels of waste arising in the South East.*