

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
EXECUTIVE MEETING**

Date: 16 June 2010

Subject: **Update on the Work of the SEEC European Group**

Report by: Cllr Paul Watkins, SEEC Secretary

**Recommendation:**

That the Executive notes the progress of the work being undertaken by the SEEC European Group to develop arrangements to ensure that SEEC member councils have the opportunity to improve their access to European funding.

1. Background

- 1.1 The 2009/10 SEEC Business Plan contained an objective (1.3) to “Establish an appropriate mechanism to monitor and influence European policies and funding”. The desired outcome was to ensure SEEC is better able to influence emerging European policies and European funding for the South East is maximised. This is supported by a general view that the South East as a region is under-subscribing in terms of the available European funding.
- 1.2 To move the agenda forward, I brought together a group of both Members and officers from SEEC member councils including support from GOSE and SEEDA. This group has now met twice under the chairmanship of Alex King MBE. Following the first meeting held on 22 January the group agreed a number of key actions:
- *To ensure that appropriate linkages are made with the activities of the RTB and the EDSB* - initial discussions have now taken place at both Boards, but with the recent changes in regional working arrangements, we will now need to consider how this is taken forward.
 - *To provide better information on the main funding streams* - SEEDA provided an initial series of funding tables to the second meeting of the group held on 25 May. These will be developed and refined over time to meet SEEC’s requirements.
 - *To develop working arrangements between SEEC and Southern England Local Partners (SELP)* - Roy Perry has met with Alex King and Alan Marsh to discuss future working opportunities. As a result, SELP and Kent will work closer together to help support other South East authorities who wish to develop their involvement.

1.3 As mentioned above, the second meeting of the group took place on 25 May. Key areas of discussion were:

- The need for changes in working arrangements as new policies and budget saving measures emerge from the coalition Government.
- The changing value of the Euro together with operating within the difficult financial climate. For example, traditional sources of match funding for projects is reducing, meaning that joint participation is likely to become more important.
- The need for effective information and intelligence flow and support to SEEC. Heather Bolton will be developing ideas to improve the communications with all member councils on European activities.
- The need to develop specific terms of reference for the group to guide and shape its future work and direction.
- To develop a case for member representation on the ERDF Competitiveness Programme Selection Committee (PSC).
- To provide advice to the LGA on South East nominations to the Congress of Europe and to ensure SEEC can link through to the work of the Committee of the Regions to help promote South East specific interests.

2. Summary

2.1 Involvement with Europe and the potential funding opportunities available will remain important to SEEC member councils. The group has taken a number of initial steps to improve coordination and information flow across the South East. However there is much more to do particularly bearing in mind the need to respond effectively within a rapidly changing regional environment. I will keep the Executive informed of all future developments and achievements, particularly where new funding opportunities have been secured.

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