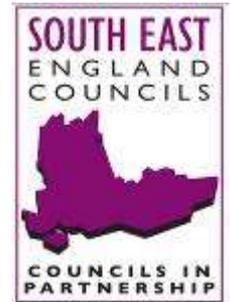


**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & ALL-MEMBER MEETING**

Date: 21 June 2012

Subject: **Report of SEEC Data Dashboard Task & Finish Group**

Report by: Cllr Martin Tett, SEEC Economy & Skills Spokesperson



Recommendations:

That members:

- i) Note the successful production of two editions of SEEC's Data Dashboard and well-received Skills & Employment Summit.
- ii) Agree proposed key messages to highlight to Government and other decision makers in the June 2012 Dashboard update.
- iii) Note SEEC's plans to hold a member workshop on service and infrastructure implications of the ageing population in autumn/winter 2012.
- iv) Agree that, now that the Dashboard is well established, this Task & Finish Group be disbanded.

1. Review of 2011-12

- 1.1 I am pleased to report the first two editions of the Dashboard have been well received by members and other decision makers.
- 1.2 The Dashboard, published in July and December last year, draws on a range of data to highlight key issues facing the South East on six topics, also providing local data where available evidencing the scale of challenges and economic opportunities in the South East. As well as being circulated to SEEC members and published on-line, we send summaries to MPs, emphasising key issues facing the South East and our need for a fair approach to policy and investment.
- 1.3 Importantly the Dashboard has been a useful tool to help members identify key issues where SEEC should take action. One such issue is the unacceptably high level of youth unemployment in the South East. I was pleased to host a *South East Skills & Employment Summit* in March, bringing members, business, education and Government partners together, along with Employment Minister Chris Grayling, to discuss actions to support business growth and tackle unemployment. We are clear we need to ensure our people have the best chances when it comes to applying for work – whether highly specialist qualifications or the basic life and attitude skills that so many employers are looking for. SEEC will look at what further action we can take forward on this during the coming year.

2. Draft June 2012 Data Dashboard - Key Issues for Member Comment

- 2.1 Draft summary sections of the forthcoming Data Dashboard update are attached for member comments (see Annex). The full Dashboard, some 40+ sheets, will be available on SEEC's website for members by the end of this month.

2.2 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 through investment and policy. In particular the South East's large population and significant scale of deprivation need to be recognised, as does the key role we play driving the national economy.

2.3 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 & Employment

- Reflecting the national picture, the number of unemployment claimants in the South East increased over the last year to around 143,000 (considerably higher than North East, East Midlands, East and South West). This is however some 10,000 lower than the same month two years earlier. Many analyses hide the significant total by looking at percentages rather than actual numbers.
- Unemployment claimant levels for under-25s are a concern, being above national average rates in 10 Districts/ Unitaries. This reflects national trends with high levels of young people not in employment, education or training.
- Job density (number of jobs per resident in an area) remained static between 2009 and 2010, following a significant fall the year before.
- Total jobs increased by 70,000 between 2009 and 2010, although still 23,000 lower than the 2008 level.
- In line with national trends, GVA (economic output) *per head* in the South East rose between 2009 and 2010, following a fall the previous year. However this is a long way behind London and now only just above the national average; looking at *total* GVA hides this as it doesn't take population size into account, giving the impression of stronger performance.
- Over 450,000 South East residents have no qualifications, a problem masked if 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 in infrastructure as well as skills and employability to meet business needs.*

B) Housing & Infrastructure

- The South East built the most homes in England during 2011-12, a total of 22,240 (private + affordable). This is a small increase on 2010-11, but significantly below the peak of 30,200 in 2007-08. The drop of over 1000 affordable home completions p.a. since 2009-10 is of particular concern.
- Overall the South East has the second highest New Homes Bonus allocation (£34m yr1; £41m yr2). This reflects the relatively high levels of development compared to elsewhere in England, although individual local authority allocations vary considerably.
- At £257 per head in 2009/10, 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, allocations of the Government's 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 in the South East given both population size and the need to ensure economic success.*

C) Public Finances & Grants

- South East authorities received the lowest average central government formula grant per head in 2011-12, at just £374, 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 Euro 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, but still important to support locally-driven business-focused projects.
- *There is a need for fairer levels of central government, and continued European, funding in the South East to fuel our potential to support national economic recovery and reflect the South East's large population.*

D) Demography

- At over 8.6m people, the South East has the largest population in England, and is projected to grow by 1.1m over the next 20 years.
- At least 50% increase is expected in the number of 65+ year olds, and over 80% increase in 75+ year olds, well above national average over the next 20 years.
- The South East has also seen a relative increase in the number of people living in deprived areas between 2007 and 2010 compared to other parts of England, with 565,000 people living in areas classified in the 20% most deprived in the country.
- Over 484,000 children and older people live in income deprivation in the South East, the 4th highest total in England, a fact hidden if only looking at percentages.
- *Continued investment and action is needed to address both the challenges of population change, in particular care and health services, and long-term areas of deprivation.*

E) Migration

- Although hard to estimate exact numbers due to official data limitations, there are indications that whilst the total number of international migrants *entering* the South East reduced slightly between 2007-08 and 2009-10, the significant reduction in migrants *leaving* the South East in 2009-10 means that *net* international migration increased significantly in the South East to England's highest levels.
- The distribution of immigrants and their impact on services and resources varies considerably across different parts of the South East.
- Internal migration levels (ie people moving within the UK) are also highest 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 between 2009/10 and 2010/11, albeit at a slower rate than preceding years; municipal waste levels remained static over the same period, 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 but only 5th best in England.
- During the same period, municipal waste sent to landfill fell from 51% to 33%, continuing to do better than the national average, and the second best in England.
- *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.*

3. Forward Plan 2012-13

- 3.1 SEEC will continue to update the Data Dashboard twice a year, identifying key policy and delivery implications to influence decision makers. We welcome member feedback on any further improvements to make to it, although I would reinforce the Task & Finish Group's original advice that SEEC's staff resource has limited capacity so we have to keep the Dashboard well focused.
- 3.2 We will continue to monitor key issues arising that require focused attention by SEEC or partners. A key issue identified in the Dashboard is the dramatic growth in the South East's older population over the next 10-20 years. This has huge implications for service delivery and infrastructure, so we propose holding a workshop for SEEC members and partners at end of this year on what we can do to plan for this demographic time-bomb. I also hope initial results of last year's national Census will be available by then to feed into the event.
- 3.3 The member-led Data Dashboard Task & Finish Group provided vital input and steer prior to production of the first Dashboard last year. At last year's AGM SEEC agreed to extend the life of the group by a year to oversee further Dashboard development as required. In practice the Dashboard is now well established and member input is gathered through our main SEEC meeting cycle. Therefore I recommend the Task & Finish group can be disbanded.