

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



Date: 13 July 2011

Subject: **South East England Councils' Business Plan**

Report of: Heather Bolton, SEEC Head of Communications & Public Affairs

Recommendation:

Members are asked to contribute views on priority topics/ additional work areas for inclusion in SEEC's business plan 2011-12 and agree a revised meeting schedule.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 An outline SEEC business plan has been drafted to prompt discussion and input from members on their priorities for SEEC in 2011-12.
- 1.2 Section 3 below builds on last year's agreed priorities, for example continuing the work on fairer funding for local government and taking account of recommendations from SEEC's task & finish groups on Europe and Data.
- 1.3 Today's discussion is members' opportunity to review the proposed plan and put forward alternative or additional work areas that SEEC's small secretariat will help take forward in the coming year.
- 1.4 Following today's debate, a final draft business plan will be submitted to the SEEC Executive in September 2011.

2. SEEC principles and objectives

- 2.1 It is suggested that SEEC maintains a focus on the 4 principles and 4 objectives agreed by members in 2010.

Principles:

- Strive for a fair funding deal for the South East
- Promote the South East's position as a leading global economy
- Act as single democratic voice for South East interests
- Monitor the pulse of the South East.

Objectives:

- Provide a framework for member-led co-ordinated action on issues of common concern such as the economy, investment and funding.
- Maintain an overview of key data and trends across the 74 South East councils to inform strategic needs.
- Be the democratic voice for all tiers of South East local government.
- Maintain a flow of member and external communications on SEEC's work.

3. Proposed work areas for 2011-12

- 3.1 Building on priorities identified last year, the draft business plan for 2011-12 covers:
 - i) **Local authority finance** – continue to argue for a fair funding deal for South East Councils, including proposals for changing the formula grant system.
 - ii) **Data dashboard** – produce a SEEC dashboard three times a year showing key data on economy & employment; housing & infrastructure; public finance

- and grants; demography; migration; environment. Take ownership of SEEDA economic data archive and makes this available via the SEEC website.
- iii) **Europe** – raise awareness of EU funding opportunities for South East councils and feed member views into Government and EU to influence future funding streams.
 - iv) **Transport** – make the case to Government for strategic transport investment that will support the South East and national economies, appointing a SEEC member to lead the work as Transport Convenor.
 - v) **Migration** – raise member awareness of migration policy issues via SEEC's hosting of the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM). A separate SESPM business plan¹ sets out how UKBA funding is being used to provide a practical resource, helping the South East understand migration issues, influence and inform policy.
 - vi) **Member input and communications** – organise a programme of meetings, workshops and task groups to enable member debate and agreement on key issues, ensuring SEEC's work is member-led. Regular website updates and newsletters, plus media relations where appropriate.
 - vii) **Influencing decision makers** – ensure SEEC members represent the views of the South East via dialogue with ministers, nominations to the LGA and other external bodies, and input/ responses to government policy proposals.
 - viii) **SEEC resources** – consolidate SEEC staffing and ensure effective management of staff and financial resources to support members' priority projects. Develop relationships with officer networks where additional support is needed.

3.2 Members are invited to **agree any additional areas** that they wish to see included in the SEEC business plan for 2011-12. Subject to resources and members' priorities, additional areas to consider could include:

- a) Exploring potential for joint working on a South East infrastructure summit in the autumn. Partners could include SESL and IESE.
- b) Exploring possible joint working with LEPs on issues such as investment in South East economic growth and infrastructure. This could include raising awareness of the need for better broadband connectivity in the South East.
- c) Researching how to deliver economic growth in currently under-performing areas of the South East, such as coastal Kent, Sussex and Hampshire.
- d) Reviewing how changes in the NHS offer opportunities for councils to ensure health services are closely matched to local needs.
- e) Reviewing the impact of New Homes Bonus one year on.
- f) Reviewing the progress of the Localism Bill and its impact on South East councils.
- g) Reviewing approaches to balancing environmental factors with demand for development.

Members are invited to put forward alternative suggestions for discussion at the AGM. For example, members may wish to highlight areas in forthcoming legislation where a collective voice from South East councils would be valuable.

3.3 An outline budget for 2011-12 (below) estimates SEEC running costs at just under £360,000 (including some projects funded by SESPM). This covers all costs including 3 staff, meetings, office admin & IT, and a budget for commissioning project work. The final budget will be amended to take

http://www.secouncils.gov.uk/Migration_business_plan.pdf

account of member input on work areas and priorities. Subscription income is expected to fully fund staff salaries (including NI & pension) plus costs of Executive and All-Member meetings. Further costs would be drawn from reserves.

Outline SEEC budget for 2011-12

<u>Income/ reserves</u>		<u>£</u>
Estimated subscriptions income		220,000
SESPM support & project contributions		9,408
Reserves		<u>129,592</u>
	Total income	359,000
<u>Expenditure</u>		<u>£</u>
Staff costs (inc NI & pension)		190,000
Member meetings		25,000
Admin/ Office costs		18,250
IT costs & web upgrade to host SEEDA data		27,000
Committed projects (transport, finance)		66,500
Committed projects with SESPM funding		7,250
Uncommitted project fund		<u>25,000</u>
	Total expenditure	359,000

- 3.4 Following an Executive Committee request to move future SEEC AGMs forward from July to June, a proposed new meeting schedule is attached as Annex 1.



SEEC PROPOSED MEETING SCHEDULE 2012

SEEC Executive Committee on 7 June requested a re-scheduling of meetings in future years to bring forward SEEC's AGM from July to June.

Moving the AGM and annual elections to June will make the AGM the first SEEC meeting after May's local elections. Previously SEEC has held an Executive Committee in June, but councillor changes following May elections mean that some Executive members are no longer eligible to attend.

The revised schedule proposed below will avoid this problem. It also schedules three SEEC leadership meetings for the Chairman & lead SEEC office-holders to guide the planning for All-Member meetings.

Dec 2011	<u>Exec 16 Dec</u>
Jan 2012	Leadership meeting
Feb 2012	All-member meeting 1 (Early February)
Mar 2012	Executive 1 (Before purdah 22 March)
April 2012	no meetings (Purdah)
May 2012	Leadership meeting (Elections)
June 2012	AGM & All-member meeting 2 (Mid June)
July 2012	Executive 2 (Before Parliamentary recess)
August 2012	no meetings
September 2012	Executive 3 (Mid September)
October 2012	Leadership meeting
November 2012	All-member meeting 3 (Early November)
December 2012	Executive 4 (Mid December)

Any member workshops, task & finish groups, additional meetings required would be arranged as required to complement this main meeting schedule.