

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
PLENARY AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Date: 14 July 2010

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

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

Recommendations:

SEEC is recommended to:

- 1) Agree the attached business plan and four high level objectives.
 - 2) Keep the detail of the business plan and related action plan under review as the Government's policy agenda continues to develop.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The SEEC business plan has been drafted to take account of the expanded secretariat and priority areas recommended by SEEC's member working group in agenda item PI.5.
- 1.2 It builds on last year's business plan, which helped SEEC establish a firm base from which to develop further its work and influence. Changes in Government policy since the May 2010 General Election have made the role of SEEC as a collective voice for South East local authorities even more important. The removal of former regional structures will require local authorities to develop a more direct relationship with central Government, a role that SEEC is well placed to fulfill.

2. Summary of Business Plan Priorities

- 2.1 The business plan proposes four objectives for SEEC, with each one supported by a more detailed action plan setting out key activities and desired outcomes for the year. The four objectives are:
 - i) To be the democratically representative voice of South East England.
 - ii) To provide a framework for co-ordinated action by South East England Councils, or groups of councils, on issues of common concern within the South East or with neighbouring areas.

- iii) To monitor the 'state of the region' and formulate an appropriate strategic response by councils.
 - iv) To keep members and partner organisations informed about the work of SEEC and to ensure members are able to provide input to SEEC's direction.
- 2.2 Last year's business plan included an additional objective: 'To contribute to the development, implementation and monitoring of regional strategic policies, which will be included in the single Regional Strategy.' This has been removed following confirmation that the Regional Strategy has been abolished. Any residual activities relating to a strategic oversight and support for individual councils' planning work have been incorporated elsewhere, primarily in objectives two and three.
- 2.3 An outline financial plan is included in the business plan. This reflects the subscriptions recommendation from the SEEC member working group. In addition, an estimated figure is included for a carry over from last year's unspent SEEC budget. It is proposed that once the carry over amount is confirmed, this money is used to fund additional public affairs work, including a small number of high profile events to help raise SEEC's profile and influence with Government. This could be achieved at no extra cost to members in 2010-11 and 2011-12. Any remaining funds could also allow a small amount of leeway in salary negotiations during staff recruitment.

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