SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
Data Dashboard Task and Finish Group

Date: 15 April 2011

Subject: Draft Data Dashboard

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

Recommendation:
That the Task and Finish Group discusses the issues in this paper, as well as annexed examples of possible data to include, to inform further development of the Dashboard.

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1. Background

1.1   The SEEC Data Dashboard Task and Finish Group first met in February 2011. It agreed the group's focus should be to identify a focused 'dashboard' of data that would help SEEC and its member local authorities to:
   • Understand strategic issues affecting their areas, and consequently
   • Influence government policy and investment decisions on these key issues.

1.2   The group agreed to initially explore data under five thematic headings, shown below, to cover SEEC's broad areas of interest. Given SEEC's relatively limited resources, the group agreed the aim should be to identify a small number of key data/indicators under each theme. The focus should be on data available from existing sources rather than requiring commissioning of new research. Members suggested possible indicators for exploration, shown as 'egs' below:

   i.   Economy and employment eg. skills; unemployment; business births/deaths; job growth/losses; job vacancy rates
   ii. Housing and infrastructure eg. housing starts/completions; social housing investment/completions; levels of new homes bonus achieved.
   iii. Public finance and grants eg. distribution of local government/health funding; amount of Regional Growth Fund awarded; EU programme funding.
   iv. Demography and migration eg. age structure and projections; national and international migration to South East; deprivation; life expectancy; Migrant National Insurance numbers (NINOs)/other key migration data.
   v.   Environment eg. recycling rates; waste arising.

1.3   The Task & Finish Group is due to report its recommendations on the way forward at the SEEC AGM in July. If SEEC agrees to proceed

with producing a Dashboard, it would be good to be in a position to 'publish' the first dashboard soon after the AGM. This means having a draft dashboard developed in time for the AGM, which will also help SEEC members in taking their decision.

1.4   The purpose of this paper is to outline key issues for consideration that will inform the SEEC secretariat's further work on the dashboard. Essentially there are three parts to this paper:

- Overarching issues/key questions.
- Possible data sets (Annex 1).
- Examples of how the data might be presented (Annex 2>)

2.   Proposals for Discussion by Task & Finish Group

2.1   Following the advice from the first meeting, we propose the following structure for the Data Dashboard, which we invite members' views on:

> a. **Six thematic one page summaries of key indicators at South East level** (Economy and employment; Housing and infrastructure; Public finance and grants; Demography[1]; Migration; Environment), including short commentary on key issues and policy/lobbying implications.
> b. Each summary to be **supplemented with additional datasets/more detailed local authority (where possible CC/UA/DC) information**.
> c. Links to be provided to original source/further information on the internet (eg ONS website).

2.2   **The range of datasets which we propose drawing from is set out in Annex 1**. We invite member comments on which data sets would be most important to include at the summary and more detailed levels (a and b above), and whether there is anything to remove or add.

2.3   To assist discussions, we have produced **outline draft samples of how the sections might look. These are included as Annex 2-6**; we invite member views on preferred ways the data could be presented, and the general format/approach in order to inform further development – please note, these are very early drafts, and issues around consistency of format/legibility etc will be addressed in further development. For clarity, the Annex samples are:

- Annex 2 – Sample of Economy theme one-page summary.
- Annex 3 – Sample of Economy theme, detailed breakdown of unemployment data by local authority (ie one of several supplementary sheets to accompany the one page summary).

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[1] We recommend separating demography and migration into two distinct, but related, sections.

- Annex 4 – Sample of Housing and Infrastructure theme, detailed breakdown of New Homes Bonus.
- Annex 5 – Sample of Demography theme one-page summary.
- Annex 6 – Sample of Migration theme one-page summary.

3. Other Key issues for discussion

3.1 How often to produce dashboard?
- Key considerations are the frequency at which the source data is updated by ONS etc (this varies from monthly to quarterly to annually), as well as how we can integrate release of Dashboard updates with the SEEC meeting cycle (eg Executive Committee and all-member meetings).
- Resources and officer time to produce the Dashboard are also important considerations.
- Would three Dashboard updates each year be an appropriate frequency, but with the flexibility to identify/share any new data that raises significant issues between times?

3.2 Presentation/mapping of data?
- Although mapping some data would be helpful for presentation, SEEC does not have in-house capabilities (software or staff skills) for this at present and it would be costly to do this.
- Should SEEC approach local authorities to see if any could support this with GIS resources, or look at other 'automated' mapping packages eg Cultural Framework?
- Furthermore, assistance with charting/Excel analysis more generally may be helpful to ensure the data is presented as effectively as possible.
- Is there a need/case to employ an external resource in helping with analysis/presentation/mapping of data?

3.3 Level of geographic breakdown?
- Are we right to include South East/regional comparison figures in the summary page, and County/Unitary/District breakdowns where possible in the detailed sections – the assumption being that although this level of disaggregation adds considerably to the size of the Dashboard document itself, it will make it more helpful to individual local authorities.

3.4 How best to make the Dashboard available?
- We propose that the Dashboard is primarily made available through the SEEC website, with hard copies only produced in-house if the need arises. Is this the right approach?
- There is also the potential to include the Dashboard in papers to update members at the SEEC Executive/all member meeting.