

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

Date: 11 July 2013

Subject: **Helping local authorities deliver on economic growth.  
Speaker Alex Thomson/Steven Howell, Localis**

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



**Recommendation:**

Members are invited to note and discuss key issues that will help South East local authorities deliver economic growth, to be addressed in SEEC & Localis' report to Government prior to its launch in summer 2013.

---

**1. Background**

- 1.1 Following member discussion at previous meetings, SEEC is working with local government think tank Localis to produce a short report to influence Government on how best to support local authorities' commitment to economic growth in the South East.
- 1.2 The South East's economic success is critical to local and national economic recovery, offering the highest net returns to the Exchequer. However despite local government's commitment, there are barriers holding back its ability to help realise the South East's full economic potential. The report will highlight positive action that's already taking place and barriers that Government should lift to maximise local government's opportunities to enable economic growth - both in its own right and as key partner, for example in LEPs.
- 1.3 The report is nearly finalised, following input from SEEC members and partners over the last four months. A Westminster launch is being planned for summer 2013 in advance of Autumn Party Conferences. We are pleased to welcome a lead member of the Localis team to SEEC's AGM, who will give members a preview of key issues being covered and the opportunity for discussion in advance of the launch.

**2. Key Issues**

- 2.1 For context, the report will set out the South East's key economic role locally and nationally, emphasising the high return on investment offered and its key transport gateway role for London and rest of UK. It also highlights that the South East's success is not uniform and cannot be taken for granted in the face of global competition, with significant unemployment concerns, an ageing population, deprivation, and heavily congested transport all putting pressure on the public purse and having implications for future economic growth potential.
- 2.2 Localis highlights nine key areas where further devolution, freedoms or action from Government could help local opportunities and prospects, broadly split into two key sections set out below. The final report will make specific recommendations addressing key issues including:

i. Making it happen - what LAs need to support economic growth:

- **Proportionate funding allocations for economic development** - how best to maximise national and local returns on Government, EU and local investment.
- **Local growth architecture: the need for a level playing field** - ensuring all areas have City Deal type devolution opportunities and maximising the scope and impact of the 2015 Single Pot budget.
- **Financing the future: setting councils free to drive growth** - ensuring local government has maximum opportunities for finance raising.
- **Public sector reform** - maximising local democratically-accountable control over local public services to ensure needs and opportunities are addressed effectively and efficiently.

ii. Creating the conditions for business growth:

- **Improving business access to finance and support** - ensuring bank lending is available to support SME growth.
- **Planning processes and housing supply that aid development** - finding ways to ensure locally-agreed development progresses where and when its needed.
- **Better transport infrastructure** - tackling the gap in the market for major transport schemes.
- **Ensuring fit for purpose skills provision** - greater local control over skills commissioning and budgets.
- **Faster broadband** - lifting barriers to local delivery of high speed broadband.