

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

Date: 13 November 2013

Subject: **Planning for Growth and Infrastructure**

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



Recommendations:

SEEC Executive members are asked to:

- i) Welcome Sir Michael Pitt's update on the Planning Inspectorate's role and work.
- ii) Discuss how the Planning Inspectorate can best support councils' priorities for growth and critical infrastructure.

1. Introduction

1.1 We are pleased to welcome Sir Michael Pitt, Chief Executive, and Keith Holland, Group Manager, from the Planning Inspectorate to SEEC's Executive committee. Whilst councils are instrumental to implementing the new 'locally-led' planning system, the Planning Inspectorate (and its network of inspectors) holds a key adjudication role in the new planning regime. Key responsibilities include:

- **National infrastructure planning** (formerly the Infrastructure Planning Commission's role) - examining applications for large projects that support the economy and vital public services eg railways, wind farms, power stations, reservoirs, airports. Current South East workload includes motorways (eg M20 J10A); Rampion offshore windfarm; Port of Southampton biomass energy plant.
- **Examining Local Plans & Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedules.**
- **Planning appeals.**

1.2 They will explain the Planning Inspectorate's role, priorities and work with local authorities to implement the new planning system, before taking questions.

2. Key issues for discussion

2.1 Planning and delivering development and infrastructure in the South East is essential to support our growing population and economic potential. It is also critical for national economic recovery as we are a global gateway for the UK, and offer the greatest returns on Government investment. With the highest levels of house building in England, members are keen to see supporting infrastructure delivered.

2.2 Members believe the Planning Inspectorate and Government could better support councils in delivering growth in areas including:

- Maximising local discretion over planning decisions wherever possible.
- Ensuring Duty to Co-operate does not unduly delay Local Plan progress.
- Maximising local incentives for housing growth by retaining councils' full discretion on New Homes Bonus spending.
- Recognising councils' need to balance priorities with the expectations of community groups, businesses and Government when conflicting views emerge via neighbourhood plans, Local Plans, National Planning Policy Framework and the role of LEPs in planning.
- Implementing Lord Taylor's review on streamlining national guidance.
- Ensuring planning approvals turn into development, for example introducing discretionary 'use it or lose it' planning permission powers for councils.
- Ensuring local views are considered in nationally-significant infrastructure decisions, given the South East's gateway role and high demand for energy & water.