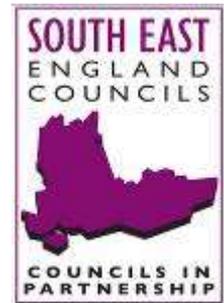


**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & ALL-MEMBER MEETING**

Date: 3 July 2014

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

Report of: Heather Bolton, SEEC Director



**Recommendation:**

Members are asked to contribute views on priority topics and work areas for inclusion in SEEC's business plan 2014-15

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 An initial draft SEEC business plan has been prepared to prompt discussion and input from members on work priorities for 2014-15.
- 1.2 Members are invited to review the proposals and put forward alternative or additional work areas for SEEC's small secretariat to take forward.
- 1.3 Building on a number of successful joint projects with SESL in the past year (see agenda item 3), there is potential to continue joint working to strengthen the South East voice and share officer resources. After today's member input, officers will discuss joint opportunities over the summer, feeding into a final draft business plan to be submitted to SEEC Executive in September 2014.

**2. Proposed work areas for 2014-15**

- 2.1 The draft business plan reflects SEEC's four principles, which are to:
  - 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.
- 2.2 Building on last year's agreed priorities, the draft plan for 2014-15 focuses on:
  - Infrastructure and funding
  - Health and wellbeing
  - Ongoing policy and data work to support South East interests.
- 2.3 Common themes throughout the business plan proposals include:
  - Making the case – and providing evidence – to support more investment in South East infrastructure. This will help drive national economic benefits and deliver an excellent return on public investment.
  - Greater devolution of funding and powers to South East local authorities, building on existing devolution to Scotland, Wales and core cities. This will help support economic growth through better infrastructure and skills as well as effective, integrated service delivery.
  - Maximising the benefit to the South East of national and EU funding streams.
  - The need to maximise local control and minimise red tape imposed on local services by central Government and the EU.

**FIRST DRAFT SEEC business plan 2014-2015**

| <b>A. Infrastructure and funding</b>   |  |
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| <p><b>Aim A1:</b> Secure greater infrastructure investment and funding devolution to help South East councils drive economic growth as part of the engine room of UK plc</p> | <p><b>Activity planned includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Present the South East case for investment and financial devolution to help influence 2015 General Election manifestos.</li> <li>ii) Raise the profile of South East strategic transport investment needs using the Mind the Gap report to engage MPs, partners and media.</li> <li>iii) Ensure South East priorities are reflected in London’s Infrastructure 2050 debate, highlighting the mutual benefits of investment in shared transport, utilities and services.</li> <li>iv) Make the case for greater devolved funding and powers for South East authorities, including greater local tax retention to help fund infrastructure that is essential to economic growth.</li> <li>v) Research to examine the case for a more balanced approach to investing in successful economies such as the South East.</li> <li>vi) Work to define the benefits of localising skills &amp; employment funding and an action plan for devolving responsibility to local authority level.</li> <li>vii) Member workshop on how to maximise South East economic potential and work successfully with LEPs to boost growth and productivity.</li> <li>viii) Update members on wider South East infrastructure issues and opportunities to influence areas such as aviation, power, water, skills and broadband.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Aim A2:</b> Support South East councils in their work to develop sustainable local plans that reflect local housing and infrastructure needs.</p>                      | <p><b>Activity planned includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) A workshop on Duty to Co-operate to help members and officers consider the building blocks required for sound local plans.</li> <li>ii) Represent South East interests during the Examination in Public for the updated London Plan.</li> <li>iii) Make the case for greater local discretion on planning issues, including powers to turn planning approvals into real development.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Aim A3:</b> Influence funding for South East authorities, including national Government and EU funding streams.</p>  | <p><b>Activity planned includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Make the case for Government’s core funding of council services to be based on scale of population, reflecting the demands on the South East as the UK’s most populated area.</li> </ul>  |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii) Report on progress of EU funding in the South East via ERDF 2014-2020 and potential for council involvement in managing committees.</li> <li>iii) Ensure updates for members on emerging UK and EU funding potential.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>B. Health &amp; wellbeing</b>   |   |
| <b>Aim B1:</b> Influence funding and policy decisions to help South East authorities deliver effective, integrated local services, particularly in health and care.  | <p><b>Activity planned includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Present the case for changes in health and care funding &amp; policy to help influence 2015 General Election manifestos.</li> <li>ii) Make the case for adequate funding for Care Act reforms, particularly the impact of the care cap on South East authorities with high populations and high numbers of self funders.</li> <li>iii) Promote the role of democratically-elected councillors in leading effective integration of health, care and wider services to meet local needs.</li> <li>iv) Work with London Councils to ensure effective communications on London residents who need to be housed in South East council areas.</li> </ul> |
| <b>C. On-going areas of work</b>   |   |
| <b>Aim C1:</b> Maintain an evidence base to support SEEC influencing work.   | <p><b>Activity planned includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Publish two Data Dashboard updates per year, identifying key policy issues for SEEC and partners to act upon.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Aim C2:</b> Monitor national/EU policy & legislation affecting local government to identify relevant opportunities to influence direction, minimise bureaucracy and support local determination rather than central regulation. | <p><b>Activity planned includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Ensure South East views are represented through responses to consultations, discussions and briefings on relevant policy issues at national and European levels.</li> <li>ii) Priority topics for SEEC influencing are maximising local control and minimising bureaucracy in local government funding, planning, infrastructure, economic growth and service reform.</li> <li>iii) Make the case for minimising burdens and bureaucracy arising from any EU policy proposals affecting local government as the new EU work programme emerges following May 2014 elections.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Aim C3:</b> Maintain hosting arrangement with South East Strategic Partnership for Migration, ensuring updates for members on key migration issues.   | <p><b>Activity planned includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Update members on a proposed South East Anti-Trafficking Partnership to help tackle Modern Day Slavery.</li> <li>ii) Regular reports for members on migration trends in the South East, including migrants' economic role and service needs.</li> </ul>  |