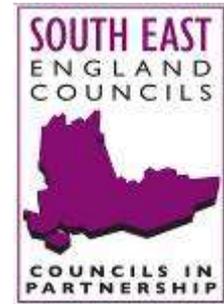


**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & ALL-MEMBER MEETING**



Date: 3 July 2014

Subject: **Invest in success – how to maximise South East economic potential for UK PLC**

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

Recommendations:

- i) Discuss what powers, freedoms and investment are needed to maximise the South East's economic potential.
- ii) Building on existing work, agree to scope research to progress the case for investing in South East economic potential to underpin national success.

1. Background

- 1.1 SEEC members have previously raised concerns that the economic potential of the South East is being overlooked by Government's city-centric focus. Furthermore new Growth Deals being negotiated between LEPs and Government are likely to be constrained by the national annual £2bn funding pot, with indications that the fund is hugely oversubscribed.
- 1.2 In 2013 SEEC undertook work with think-tank [Localis](#), recommending 9 changes to support locally-led, democratically-accountable economic growth for national success. Many of these are now achieving traction with other partners. It is therefore timely for SEEC to consider how best to progress this debate further with Government, in particular what additional research would strengthen the case for maximising South East economic potential for UK plc.
- 1.3 We are pleased to welcome two guest speakers to this meeting to help members scope this issue further:
Lee Shostak is Chairman of economic development specialists [Shared Intelligence](#) and the Town & Country Planning Association. He has worked with councils and agencies in the UK and overseas to prepare strategic growth plans and visions. Prior to creating Shared Intelligence, Lee established a planning and design practice with Sir Terrence Conran and was the Director of Planning at Milton Keynes Development Corporation.
Andrew Carter is Deputy Director of the [What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth](#) and Deputy Chief Executive of Centre for Cities. Founded in 2013, the What Works Centre is a collaboration between the London School of Economics and Political Science, Centre for Cities and Arup, and is funded by the Economic & Social Research Council, DCLG and BIS. It will assess and recommend policies to support local economic growth. Andrew has previously worked for a range of public and private development agencies, consultants and research institutes.

2. Key issues for discussion

- 2.1 Key recommendations arising from SEEC's work with Localis which are gaining traction with others, for example the recent report of the [County All Party Parliamentary Group](#) and [District Councils Network](#) general election manifesto, include:
 - Rebalancing Government's approach to seize non-city opportunities – invest in success as well as regeneration.

- Devolving control over more money from central to local government, plus financial freedoms for councils to become more financially independent.
- Need for powers/freedoms/finance to deliver key infrastructure projects that underpin economic success.
- Ensuring effective and democratic operation of LEPs.

2.2 To identify what more needs to be done to support the South East's economic success, our speakers will help members consider '*How/why is the South East different to the rest of the country; and therefore what needs to be done differently?*' Key issues members may wish to explore include:

1. What are **your local economic growth aspirations** - how do they vary across the South East?
2. **What can your council do itself** to support economic success? *eg plans for housing, employment land, infrastructure.*
3. How can you help **ensure LEPs are effective and accountable** locally?
4. What changes are needed to better **influence big infrastructure projects or other investments** that will underpin economic growth? *eg global transport gateways; pan-local authority commuting or trade transport routes.*
5. What **financial devolution** do you need to drive growth?

2.3 Building on SEEC's previous work, members are invited to scope what additional commissioned work could help progress the case for supporting/investing in successful economies like the South East to underpin national economic growth. The work would be undertaken summer-winter 2014. If members agree to progress this work officers will also explore LEP participation in the project.