

**SOUTH EAST STRATEGIC LEADERS &
SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
JOINT MEETING**



Date: 3 July 2014

Subject: Making the case for the South East: Update on SESL-SEEC Campaigns

Report of: Philippa Mellish, SESL Policy Manager

Recommendation: Members are invited to note the update.

1. Introduction

1.1 South East Strategic Leaders (SESL) and South East England Councils (SEEC) continue to work together to present a strong, united voice for councils within their memberships on issues of shared concern. As well as strengthening our influence, joint working is helping to make good use of members' time, reduces costs and shares officer capacity to support work across a broad range of policy areas. This paper provides an overview of recent and on-going joint activity.

2. South East Manifesto

2.1 In January a joint steering group was created to oversee the development of a 'South East Manifesto' to influence the policies of the main political parties in the lead up to the next general election. The manifesto content, signed off by SEEC and SESL leadership, has three headline messages focusing on the themes of maximising economic growth and delivering better public services. These are:

- **South East Success = UK Prosperity** – Let us maximise South East economic growth to help the whole UK.
- **Local Leadership = Better Services** – Let us deliver better, more affordable public services for the UK's largest population.
- **Investment + Devo-max = More Delivery** – Let us have the funding and freedoms to deliver.

2.2 We are currently working with Surrey County Council's in-house design team on the design of a manifesto pamphlet and campaign postcard, with a view to launching the campaign as soon as possible. This will provide the basis for on-going influencing activity throughout the remainder of the year and in the lead up to the general election.

3. Strategic Transport

3.1 At the end of June SESL and SEEC published [Mind the Gap](#), a joint report setting out a 10-point programme of transport investment across the South East which offers national economic benefits. Circulated widely to Ministers, MPs and media, the report calls for:

- Increased national transport investment, including a fair share for high-return South East projects that will boost economic growth and generate funds for regeneration UK-wide
- A greater share of business rates and other taxes for councils to help fund new infrastructure
- A new collaborative, co-ordinated approach to strategic transport investment decisions.

4. South East Flooding Campaign

4.1 Following a joint meeting with DEFRA Minister Dan Rogerson MP on 9 April, SESL and SEEC wrote to all South East MPs and MEPs highlighting key facts about the impact of flooding on our communities. We also sent a [campaign leaflet](#) setting out five key asks to Government to help address the full impact of recent flooding and to protect communities from future flood damage:

- Honour your promise that 'money is no object' for urgent repair and recovery
- Fix the funding formula to invest for the future
- Ensure Treasury backing for major cross-boundary schemes
- Ensure water companies do better
- Help create more flood resilient communities.

5. Housing and Planning

- 5.1 SESL and SEEC have responded to two recent consultations on housing and planning issues:
- [Government's independent inquiry into the local authority role in housing supply](#) – as well as highlighting examples of how councils are making the most of current opportunities to deliver housing, our response identified a range of powers, freedoms and financial resources that would free up local partners to drive forward locally agreed housing plans.
 - [DCLG consultation on planning performance and planning contributions](#) – our response concentrated on proposals to amend section 106 planning contributions, emphasising the importance of continued local discretion on these agreements where they are used.

6. Engaging London

- 6.1 Over the past year SESL and SEEC's relationship with London has developed significantly and a small number of members and officers now meet regularly with both the Deputy Mayor for London, Sir Edward Lister, and senior representatives from London Councils.
- 6.2 Last month SEEC and SESL responded to the Greater London Authority's (GLA) consultation on [Further Alterations to the London Plan \(FALP\)](#), calling for London to do more to meet its own housing growth and making a strong case for joint action, e.g. to help developers speed up delivery of new homes. We are awaiting a response on our request to appear at the Planning Inspectorate's FALP Examination in Public, which will run for about three weeks from 1 September.
- 6.3 We have also contributed to the GLA's work to develop a long term programme for infrastructure development – Infrastructure 2050. Our [input sets out a programme of 11 strategic transport projects](#) offering mutual benefits to London and the South East.

7. Education and Children's Services

- 7.1 On 31 May, we submitted a [joint response](#) to the Department for Education's (DfE) consultation on powers to delegate children's services. We welcomed Government's focus on driving improvements in services for children and argued that the DfE should do more to develop councils' capacity for sector improvement, building on successful examples in the South East. While welcoming the draft regulations as a means of giving councils greater powers to choose how best to provide children's services locally, our response also highlighted a number of areas that require further consideration, e.g. ensuring Elected Members retain oversight and accountability for outcomes.

8. LGA Non-Metropolitan Commission

- 8.1 In June SEEC and SESL responded to a short-notice call for evidence by the LGA's new Independent Commission on Economic Growth & the Future of Public Service in Non-Metropolitan England. We highlighted the South East's nationally-significant economy and high returns on investment. We also called for more devolution of funding and powers to help local authorities overcome barriers to growth.

9. Member Briefings

- 9.1 We have published joint Member briefings, including 'on the day briefings' on the [Queen's Speech](#) and the [Chancellor's Budget](#), as well as an overview of the [2014 local election results](#).

10. Looking ahead

- 10.1 SESL and SEEC are working towards a joint submission in July to the Service Transformation Challenge Panel call to evidence, focused on identifying what is needed to increase the pace and scale of service transformation. Following our joint event on Integrated Health and Care in December 2013, we are imminently due to publish a series of good practice case studies on integrated care. We are also exploring work with Professor Tony Travers (LSE) to apply London Finance Commission's proposals, on the devolution of all property taxes to local level, to the South East. We are also considering a response to the LGA's new Independent Commission on Local Government Finance.