

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**



Date: 19 March 2015

Subject: **Summit on future housing & infrastructure needs for South East, London and East of England: key issues**

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

Recommendations:

Members are recommended to:

- i) Use this afternoon's Summit to endorse the need for long-term political engagement with London to influence how the capital's growth & infrastructure plans affect the South East.
- ii) Support a Commission or Round-tables during 2015 to maximise the number of South East Leaders able to contribute to shaping the way forward.
- iii) Agree establishment of a small political steering group to oversee work this year and support a second Summit in November 2015 to agree a long-term way forward.

1. Background

- 1.1 Following today's SEEC's Executive, a wider South East Summit is being convened by the GLA/London Mayor, SEEC and East of England LGA (EELGA). The Summit gives South East Leaders the opportunity to agree how they want to move towards genuine political involvement and influence with London and East of England on two key issues:
 - The forthcoming **London Plan full review** (including housing) and how this relates to the South East's own needs and plans. Emerging debates in London suggest there may be a need to export some housing growth from London to the South East & East of England.
 - **Strategic infrastructure investment**, making a joint case for better transport (eg schemes in SEEC/SESL's Mind the Gap report) and how to meet growing needs (eg education and health).
- 1.2 The Summit follows SEEC's calls for greater involvement and influence in London's growth plans given potential South East implications, a need also emphasised by the Further Alterations to the London Plan inspector. Given the importance and sensitive nature of issues such as housing and Green Belt, securing firm commitment to political involvement and influence is vital. The Summit is the opportunity for members to shape mechanisms and issues for discussion over the next nine months, ready to 'go live' in early 2016 with a new long-term way of engaging with work on the new London Plan and with the new London Mayor to be elected in 2016.

2. Key issues for Summit discussion

- 2.1 The GLA emailed a Summit Discussion Paper to South East leaders on 6 March (see Annex 1). The Summit is asked to agree what arrangements are needed over the next nine months to secure and shape political involvement and influence in the longer term (post-2015). There are four key issues for SEEC members' consideration:
 - i. **Agree that Leaders want long-term political dialogue and influence on key issues in London's growth plans**
 - The Summit is the key opportunity to agree the principle of establishing long-term political involvement and influence with the GLA/Mayor.
 - SEEC's recent Task & Finish Group on London supported dialogue and identified initial priorities as planning/housing and infrastructure/transport. Possible future issues include waste, minerals, utilities, placed/looked-after children, education and health services.
 - Key issues in the Summit Discussion Paper (Annex 1 para. 4.2) are broadly consistent with these, but members may also want to raise Green Belt.
 - ii. **Agree how Leaders want to reach agreement on the shape of long-term political involvement and influence**
 - The next nine months provide a window of opportunity for South East leaders to shape the way they achieve long-term political involvement and influence.

- Summit Discussion Paper (Annex 1 para 3.1) suggests three options to progress this during 2015:
 1. Formal Commission/Panel
 2. Less-formal Round-tables
 3. Officers work to take forward options with member steer.
 - SEEC members are recommended to choose either option 1 or 2, which offer greater opportunities for more members to be involved in shaping the way forward and the topics to be considered. Further detailed issues to consider include:
 - Views on membership/Chair – extent of Cllr and ‘independent expert’ involvement?
 - Preferences for London-based meetings vs events in the South East (resources may limit this to a maximum of two South East ‘roadshows’)?
 - Should short written contributions be allowed as well as in-person discussions?
 - Ensuring parity with a parallel Mayoral process engaging London’s councils/partners through his existing Outer London Commission.
 - How best to resource/support the political process – at present officer support is ad-hoc, with informal support from SEEC/EELGA and GLA officers plus input from some councils via a planning officers’ group.
- iii. Agree a small political steering group should be established to oversee the process over next nine months**
- How do members want to ensure high-level political steer over the process alongside GLA/Mayor and EELGA? eg SEEC Chairman, Deputy and Vice Chairs? Does a steering group need to include cross-tier/cross-party representation?
- iv. Agree a 2nd political Summit in November 2015 to agree the longer-term way forward**
- Do SEEC members agree that South East council leaders should meet again with GLA/Mayor and EELGA at the end of 2015 to agree the longer-term way forward?