

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
ALL-MEMBER MEETING**



Date: 5 February 2015

Subject: **Housing, planning & infrastructure: South East opportunities**

Report of: Heather Bolton, SEEC Director
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Recommendations:

- i) Note the invitation to a joint Summit with the Mayor of London on 19 March 2015 to discuss future housing and infrastructure needs.
- ii) Note success in securing funding for several Mind the Gap transport projects and commit a small amount of officer support to develop a second stage report to highlight remaining strategic transport investment priorities for the incoming Government.
- iii) Note the headline messages from the joint SEEC-SESL response to the Airports Commission.
- iv) Note key issues arising from SEEC's successful Duty to Co-operate/planning for growth workshop.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper provides brief updates on opportunities created to address member interests and concerns on South East housing, infrastructure and planning matters.

2. Discussions with London

- 2.1 SEEC's Task & Finish group on South East dialogue with London [met](#) for the first time in November 2014, agreeing that South East councils should seek to establish formal political engagement with the Mayor/GLA and London boroughs. SEEC members are keen to discuss London's plans to meet the capital's significantly growing need for homes and infrastructure, and how these relate 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.
- 2.2 The group agreed initial priorities for dialogue should be planning/housing and infrastructure/transport. Possible future issues include waste, minerals, utilities, placed/looked-after children, education and health services. It would, however, be important to keep dialogue focused and bureaucracy to a minimum, noting SEEC's limited resources. Two opportunities are planned for members to talk with the Mayor and London Councils to consider strategic priorities and a way forward:
 - **'Wider South East Summit', 19 March 2015 (after SEEC's Executive Committee)** – the Mayor will host discussions with councillors from the South East and East of England. All SEEC members should have received invitations.
 - **Meeting between South East councils and London Councils** - plans are underway for a small group of council leaders to meet, date to be confirmed.

3. Mind the Gap transport report

- 3.1 Last summer SEEC and SESL produced [Mind the Gap](#) – a joint report setting out a 10-point programme of South East strategic transport investment needs and highlighting the economic benefits these projects would deliver. The report focuses specifically on large-scale, cross boundary infrastructure projects that fall outside the financial reach of individual local authorities or their partner LEAs.
- 3.2 The report, sent to Ministers and South East MPs, has been successful with several Mind the Gap schemes identified for funding in the Autumn Statement 2014.

- 3.3 SEEC and SESL members also met Transport Minister Baroness Kramer to discuss the South East transport investment needs set out in the report. The Minister fully recognised the economic potential of transport investment but with budgets limited, she called on members to work together to present a collective political view on a shorter list of priorities.
- 3.4 Given successful adoption of several Mind the Gap schemes, there is now potential to review the report to highlight remaining investment needs and explore whether political consensus could be reached on a shortlist of strategic schemes to present to the new Government elected in May 2015.
- 3.5 Members are asked to commit a modest amount of officer time, via the South East Directors of Economy, Environment, Planning & Transport (SEDEEPT) group to take this work forward to:
- Update Mind the Gap, removing projects now with committed funding.
 - Review any additional strategic projects that may need to be considered to support developments such as South East airport expansion, development of Crossrail 2 or implications of continuing high growth in London.
 - Present options for members to consider prioritisation of key projects.

4. South East response to the Airports Commission

- 4.1 In November 2014, members agreed to draft a joint SEEC-SESL response to the Airports Commission consultation on its shortlist of three options for extra runway capacity at either Heathrow or Gatwick. The response was awaiting final approval at the time of writing this paper.
- 4.2 Building on previous South East input to the Airports Commission, key points suggested for the response included:
- Support for one additional runway (or extension) and the economic growth it will bring – on condition there is sufficient investment in advance for infrastructure.
 - Essential infrastructure investment in advance of development must include transport, schools, hospitals & local authority services that will be needed to cater for housing growth planned around the expanded airport. There should also be safeguards about green belt protection, noise and environmental impacts.
 - South East member views differ on whether expansion should occur at Gatwick or Heathrow, but there is unanimous agreement that infrastructure investment is needed as a prerequisite for development at either location.
 - Disappointment that surface access proposals for the shortlisted schemes seem to lack ambition and innovative approaches to significantly increase the number of passengers arriving by public transport.

5. Report from SEEC's Duty to Co-operate Workshop

- 5.1 In November 2014 SEEC organised a successful workshop for district, unitary and county councillors and officers to help them address the challenges of growth through the planning system, including how to ensure they meet the requirements of the 'duty to co-operate' with other councils.
- 5.2 Tips and advice were provided by leading speakers from the Planning Inspectorate, Planning Advisory Service and independent consultancy. Council leaders and officers from South East authorities also shared local experiences and examples of good practice. Key issues from the event are summarised in Annex A. Full speaker presentations are available [on SEEC's website](#). There was good feedback on the event, with delegates agreeing SEEC had a key role in progressing the case for vital strategic transport investment, as well as representing political views on London's housing and infrastructure plans.