

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**



Date: 24 September 2015

Subject: **Partnerships, powers & leadership: making South East devolution work**

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

Recommendations:

- i) Take the opportunity to debate latest progress on devolution with guest speakers and explore lessons for the South East.
- ii) Agree key points for a SEEC submission to the Parliamentary APPG on devolution.
- iii) Consider viable alternatives to elected mayors giving non-metropolitan areas greater flexibility on devolution.

1. Today's debate

1.1 SEEC is pleased to welcome guest speakers to stimulate debate on the Government's devolution agenda:

- Cllr Lewis Rose OBE, Derby & Derbyshire (D2) Combined Authority and Leader of Derbyshire Dales DC, will give his political perspective on negotiating a multi-tier proposal, including challenges, opportunities and negotiations with Government and lessons to learn from one of England's most advanced two-tier devolution bids.
- Piali DasGupta, LGA Senior Adviser, will give members the latest position on agreed and proposed devolution deals, what's on offer from Government and next steps. This will include the state of play after Government's 4 September deadline; the timing of likely transfer of powers; what will be available to areas who bid later; and the impact of forthcoming legislation in the Cities and Devolution Bill.
- Members are encouraged to update on devolution bids in their local areas.

2. Devolution All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG): South East key messages?

2.1 SEEC has an opportunity to influence the APPG's recommendations by making a written submission, deadline 1 October. During today's debate members are asked to consider key points to include. In the light of recent progress is there a need to refine or update SEEC's previous work? Previously SEEC has made the case for:

- Devolution must be open to all councils (not just cities as was initially the case) helping councils deliver economic growth, infrastructure and effective services. South East devolution will bring powers closer to more people (8.9m population) than in any other part of the country.
- South East devolution as a route to national economic benefits, given high returns on investment.
- The need to ensure Government provides ongoing devolution opportunities and is clear about what's on offer. South East councils are keen for devolution but it takes time to develop effective partnerships given two-tier local government and size/variation of the area.
- Further specific devolution to help all South East councils, eg: greater business rate retention; local determination of planning; transport funding; health & care integration; skills.
- Flexibility on governance - Government calls for elected Mayors are unpopular in much of the South East, so other locally-determined models of accountability must be permitted.

3. Where next with SE devolution opportunities? Discussion points and actions

3.1 Issues that members may wish to explore in today's discussion include:

- Lessons from the D2 Combined Authority/other devolution bids that could help South East councils? eg. different models for joint working in two-tier areas; key success factors?
- Scope of devolution that Government is offering/agreeing; does it need to go further?
- What is on offer following the 4 September devolution proposals deadline? What's the route-map ahead for current or future devolution bids from South East councils?
- What alternatives are there to the Government's unpopular elected mayor proposals?
- How can SEEC best influence decision makers to extend devolution opportunities for all councils?