

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**



Date: 24 September 2015

Subject: **SEEC business plan and resource options**

Report of: Heather Bolton, SEEC Director

**Recommendations:**

Members are asked to:

- i) Discuss the draft SEEC business plan and agree any changes required, including views on the potential for additional special meetings and work on children's services.
- ii) Consider the proposal for additional resources to enhance SEEC communications.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The SEEC AGM in June 2015 asked for a report to today's Executive Committee setting out a detailed draft business plan and a proposal for increasing SEEC's communications resource.

**2. Business Plan**

- 2.1 Annex A sets out a two page business plan for the Executive's consideration. It builds on member comments received last month after initial discussion at the AGM and covers four main areas:

- **Devolution** – suggestions include influencing the current Bill; exploring how to achieve double and triple devolution; potential to share information on models for devolving business rates in the South East; and sharing good practice from successful devolution bids.
- **Infrastructure, housing & the economy** – suggestions include establishing political dialogue with London on housing & infrastructure pressures; making the case for investment in South East strategic transport needs; options for funding local infrastructure; and overcoming barriers to housing delivery.
- **Health & care** – suggestions include exploring the potential for devolving health and care; the role of all tiers in transforming health, care and prevention services; making the case for greater pooling of health & care budgets and adequate funding to cover councils' social care costs; and pressing for greater public health funding for the South East.
- **Underpinning/ ongoing work** – this covers ongoing work such as SEEC's data dashboard, regular member and MP updates, responses to relevant policy consultations/ discussions; and hosting the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration to ensure updates for members on issues such as refugees, asylum dispersal and Modern Slavery.

- 2.2 In delivering the business plan, it is proposed that future SEEC meetings should have a clear theme reflecting one of the key areas in the work programme.

- 2.3 Member views and suggestions on the business plan content, themed meetings and joint working with SESL are encouraged today to help shape the final document. In particular, views are welcome on:

- Support for additional, special meetings – potentially joint with SESL – on key topics such as all-tier roles in health and care devolution/ service transformation. Views are invited on the quantity and content of such meetings in addition to SEEC's annual programme of 3 Executive and 2 All-member meetings.
- Whether SEEC should include work on children's services in the business plan. Views on specific topics and potential for joint work with SESL are invited.

**3. Communications resources**

- 3.1 At the AGM members asked for a proposal on recruiting additional SEEC communications resources. This would be welcome additional capacity to enable SEEC

to enhance the profile of its views with members, media and opinion formers such as Ministers, MPs and Peers.

3.2 Areas to develop via a new post would be raising the profile of member views on key South East policy issues via:

- More proactive media work, including working with member authority media teams.
- More regular updates for South East MPs and relevant Ministers/ Peers.
- More regular member communications – eg email updates and newsletters on SEEC work.
- Website improvements and more regular web content updates.

3.3 In the short term this could be achieved with part-time communications support, for example 3-4 days a week. Member views are invited on two options for filling a post:

- Direct SEEC recruitment for a one-year fixed-term appointment.
- One or more agreements with member authorities to provide communications support.

3.4 Additional costs for SEEC would be determined by members' final decision on how to fill a post but are likely to be in the region of £30,000 - £33,000 a year. This would include salary, on-costs, travel expenses plus a modest amount to support website improvements. In a full year, these additional costs would increase the SEEC annual budget to £299,000. Actual costs would be lower for 2015-16, as the additional costs would only be incurred for part of the financial year.