

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS EXECUTIVE MEETING



Date: 26 November 2015

Subject: **Working with London on housing & infrastructure: a South East voice**

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

Recommendations:

- i) Note progress on establishing political collaboration with London and East of England.
- ii) Attend the Wider South East Summit on 11 December to agree mechanisms/actions.
- iii) Agree nominations for an all-tier political Wider South East Steering Group.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 A Wider South East (WSE) Summit on 11 December (2pm, City Hall London) will give leaders across the South East, East and London the opportunity to agree mechanisms for collaboration and priorities for action. This follows well-attended political Roundtables in July and September 2015, which 40+ South East leaders attended. All South East council leaders and LEPs have been invited to the Summit – members are encouraged to attend if they have not already replied (contact admin@secouncils.gov.uk). A South East pre-meet is expected to be held at 1pm prior to the Summit.
- 1.2 SEEC's Chairman and Deputy Chairman were among a small group who recently met with Deputy Mayor for London Sir Edward Lister and East of England colleagues, agreeing key recommendations for the Summit. These include:
 - **Mechanisms** – annual Summit for all WSE leaders/LEPs & London Mayor, with a small all-tier political Steering Group to progress actions, supported by a WSE-wide officer group. All to be in place before the new Mayor of London is elected in May 2016.
 - **Possible early joint actions to discuss/prioritise at the Summit** – for example: influencing the London Plan review/potential implications for the South East; shared understanding of data and/or shared evidence base to underpin joint working; making the case for strategic infrastructure investment; tackling barriers to housing delivery.
- 1.3 Whilst supporting political collaboration, the Chairman and Deputy emphasised:
 - The importance of London delivering against its housing targets within its own boundaries, and exploring all options to achieve this (including Green Belt review, as South East councils need to do).
 - The main focus should be housing/transport *to underpin economic prosperity* in the South East as well as London. South East economic success must be sustained and nurtured, not simply treated as a commuter zone or 'spoke' of London's wheel.
 - Any work on shared understanding of data to support WSE collective priorities (eg making the case for more infrastructure investment) must not undermine existing evidence/data used by councils – eg existing demographic projections that underpin Local Plans.
 - Tackling housing delivery barriers is important, including construction industry skills.
- 1.4 Recommendations from a parallel London-driven Outer London Commission are expected to be complementary on mechanisms for engagement. However it has already been asked to look at growth options including accommodating some London growth outside the capital. The South East must also be able to discuss this with the Mayor.

2. Steering Group nominations

- 2.1 An all-tier political Steering Group will play a key role in driving forward collaboration and actions between annual Summits, with 5 seats proposed each for South East, East and London. South East nominations are being made through SEEC, with representation expected to include County, District and Unitary members, as well as cross party and broadly representative geographic coverage. Members are invited to agree nominations at today's meeting.