

## SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS ALL-MEMBER MEETING



Date: 27 January 2017

Subject: **SEEC activity report and updates**

Report of: SEEC Secretariat – Heather Bolton, Nick Woolfenden, Emma Sutton

### Recommendations:

Members are asked to:

- i) Note the updates on SEEC work and provide comments on live projects.
- ii) Consider any follow up actions required.

### 1. Introduction

1.1 Current and recent work to represent SEEC member interests includes identifying new data trends, highlighting the importance of transport investment, raising educational standards and influencing the London Mayor's thinking on planning.

#### a) South East data and trends from SEEC's new data dashboard

Member comments are invited on the attached draft 1-side summary of SEEC's latest data dashboard (see Annex). It provides evidence on key South East opportunities and challenges for members to raise with Government in influencing funding and policy decisions. It sets out:

- **The scale of issues facing the South East's public services** e.g. The South East has the largest growing population (now 9.1m – including more than 805,000 over 75s) raising major challenges for councils and care service funding.
- **South East potential for economic growth, but challenges to overcome** e.g. The South East made the largest net contribution to the Treasury (2002-2012: £80bn) and saw the largest net growth in homes (34,900 in 2015-16) but faces an infrastructure funding gap of £15.4bn by 2030. With greater local funding freedoms councils would be able to invest more in infrastructure that would support economic growth and housing delivery.

**We welcome comments on the draft dashboard prior to finalising it for circulation to members and MPs. Please send comments to [nickwoolfenden@secouncils.gov.uk](mailto:nickwoolfenden@secouncils.gov.uk) by 10 February.**

#### b) Proposal for Transport Select Committee inquiry

b.1 Following a member meeting with Transport Select Committee Chairman Louise Ellman MP, SEEC and SESL have asked the committee to consider an inquiry on 'The economic value of transport gateways'. A proposal submitted this week asks the committee to investigate how investment in strategic transport corridors can maximise the economic potential of international gateways, especially in light of Government's recommendation to expand Heathrow Airport.

b.2 The submission highlights that business and leisure travellers from many parts of the UK use South East transport routes to reach major international gateways – this includes Heathrow alongside other major ports and airports such as Dover, Southampton and Gatwick. Potential themes for an inquiry, include:

- How investment in strategic transport corridors can maximise the economic and job creation potential of international gateways and deliver an excellent return on investment
- The detrimental effects of congestion on economic activity and the environment
- How improving public transport links and alternative road/rail routes to major gateways can help relieve pressure on already-congested corridors such as the M25 and M4.

#### c) Influencing the new London Plan: Wider South East Summit 9 December 2016

c.1 The Summit was attended by over 100 senior councilors and officers from local authorities and LEPs across the South East, London and East of England. Jointly organised by SEEC, interactive debate gave members a unique opportunity to help shape the work on the new London Plan prior to drafting, which begins this year. The London Plan is the statutory planning document for the capital and will include locations and numbers for new housing. Summarising member discussions, independent Summit facilitator Phil Swann, highlighted four key points:

- The need for a more honest discussion about whether (or not) London can meet its own housing growth, and an explicit recognition by the Mayor that the Wider South East has its own growth pressures to accommodate.
- There is an opportunity to jointly address infrastructure priorities across the Wider South East and it is important to acknowledge that not all priority routes are in and out of London.

- The Green Belt is politically sensitive everywhere. There should either be a review of the Green Belt across London and the Wider South East (to create a level playing field for all) or the Mayor should be seen to act to accommodate the housing impact of his policy to protect Green Belt within London.
  - *Some* areas have an appetite for collaboration with the Mayor on particular growth corridors.
- c.2 Responding to members' views, London Deputy Mayor Jules Pipe reiterated the Mayor's aim to meet as much as possible of London's housing need in its boundaries through greater intensification. He welcomed engaging with SEEC on big issues affecting all areas, including large-scale infrastructure. Members agreed 2017 priorities for political engagement across the Wider South East should continue to focus on influencing the London Plan, tackling housing delivery barriers, strategic infrastructure, and understanding supporting evidence.
- d) SEEC response to Mayor's consultation: A City for All Londoners**
- d.1 SEEC [responded](#) to the Mayor's '[A City for All Londoners](#)' vision that will underpin the London Plan and other work. SEEC emphasised four key strategic housing and infrastructure issues:
- Support for the Mayor's aim to meet as much of London's housing need as possible within its boundaries, but emphasising that all options should be considered - including London Green Belt release - before exploring options for growth beyond London's boundary.
  - If the Mayor can't meet London's needs in its boundaries, he should not assume London's housing demand can easily be met in the South East due to high levels of growth and/or environmental/ infrastructure constraints facing many areas. On the Mayor's suggestion for corridors outside London to help meet its housing needs, any proposals must involve councils who are willing partners, based on mutually beneficial outcomes.
  - Infrastructure investment is needed to avoid damaging London and South East economic success. Regardless of future needs, current infrastructure is creaking and the South East would welcome London's support for large-scale strategic transport schemes benefitting both areas.
  - Need for strong political co-operation between London and South East councils.
- e) SEEC response to consultation: Schools that work for everyone**
- SEEC [responded](#) to the Department for Education's 'Schools that work for everyone' consultation in December. SEEC welcomed the desire to increase the amount of good schools and improve pupil attainment but stressed this should not just be limited to new grammar schools. Highlighting a range of issues to help South East schools build on existing success, SEEC emphasised the importance of:
- The right mix of schools, with councils having greater powers to help ensure there are sufficient pupil places for both academic and vocational qualifications, which will provide the skills businesses need to succeed.
  - Adequate, fairer pupil and school improvement funding.
  - Schools having a duty to co-operate with councils to ensure all schools are accountable, transparent and deliver high quality education.
  - An advice service for parents and pupils explaining the variety of educational routes available, to make sure all pupils take the route best suited to their talents.
  - Greater emphasis on alternatives to grammar schools, alongside any new grammars, with greater local authority discretion on how best to achieve all-round educational excellence.
  - Knowledge sharing with local flexibility for councils to bring partners together to improve schools – including linking council-maintained schools with academies, encouraging links with universities and with businesses to improve pupils' employability.