

# South East First

The Newsletter of South East England Councils

December 2016

## *Good turnout drives successful Wider South East Summit*

**Over 100 councillors and officers from the South East, London and East of England attended December's annual Wider South East Summit to debate priorities for the next London Plan. This is the first time South East representatives have had the chance to influence thinking before the Plan is drafted.**

Round table discussions gave delegates the opportunity to feed in views for London to consider in drafting the London Plan and what should be the Wider South East priorities for 2017.

Looking ahead to the new London Plan, Jules Pipe and John Lett, GLA Strategic Planning Manager, ran through early thinking on how London could meet its housing need. No targets have been set yet but London will look to meet its need within its boundaries as much as possible, for example through use of brownfield sites and 'intensification' around town centres and existing transport infrastructure.

Summit Chairman Phil Swann drew out key points from discussions for London to consider, including the strong view that the Mayor should consider London's Green Belt for housing before looking at options outside his boundaries. He said there was wide-spread agreement on the importance of working together to secure infrastructure investment across the area to support housing and economic growth – although many had stressed the need to recognise that 'not all routes lead to London'. He added it was important to have an honest discussion about whether London could meet its needs and to recognise the South East has its own pressures.

SEEC Chairman Cllr Nicolas Heslop welcomed the involvement of London Deputy Mayor Jules Pipe but also highlighted the importance of direct communication with the Mayor.

The Summit also heard updates on progress made over the last year from:

- Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor of London, on the London Plan timetable
- SEEC Chairman Cllr Nicolas Heslop on overcoming barriers to housing and a forthcoming meeting with Housing Minister Gavin Barwell
- Cllr David Finch, Chairman of the East of England Infrastructure & Growth Group on infrastructure investment priorities.

SEEC's response to the Mayor of London's consultation 'A City for All Londoners' is available [here](#).

## *South East Local Growth cash puts economy at risk*

**Nineteen cross-party SEEC Executive members have co-signed a letter to Ministers calling for provisional allocations of Local Growth funding for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in the South East to be increased to ensure adequate support for the UK economy ahead of Brexit.**

LEPs across the South East have received provisional allocations of Local Growth Funding (LGF) significantly below what they were expecting – some as low as 6% of their funding proposals.

The letter to Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Secretary, Greg Clark MP and CLG Secretary, Sajid Javid MP outlines Members' concerns that the wide disparity between identified local needs and the provisional allocations risks economic growth, housing delivery, undermining business confidence in LEPs and foreign investment in the UK as we prepare for Brexit.

SEEC argues that the South East's economic success, which funds Government spending nationwide is under threat from a £15.4bn infrastructure funding gap over the next 15 years. As we prepare to leave the EU, it is critical that we reinforce the message that Britain is 'open for business' by ensuring the South East has adequate funding to help deliver the transport, skills and hi-tech infrastructure the UK needs to compete.

The letter also expresses concern at the apparent weighting of LGF in favour of areas that have Mayors or Combined Authority devolution deals. The original emphasis of LGF was that the largest allocations should be made to the places with the most compelling cases for investment. SEEC argues that LGF has a critical role in targeting investment to support growth and should not be used to force or reward specific changes in governance.

## *South East shares good practice on migration with Europe*

**Cllr Paul Watkins, Leader of Dover DC and South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) Chairman gave a presentation on the UK approach to integration of migrants at a Committee of the Regions Forum in Brussels this month.**

Speaking to delegates from across Europe, Cllr Watkins outlined current UK Protection and Refugee Resettlement Programmes and presented a case study on the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS). He attributed the success of the SVPRS to central Government allowing areas to identify the best model for them and local government making it work. The majority of local authorities have engaged, pledge levels have been met (over 3,000 in the South East alone) and re-settlements are going well.

Cllr Watkins cited central funding for five years, with additional funding for English language support (ESOL), as key drivers of success, allowing local authorities to plan and support independence. The phased approach had also allowed participating local authorities time to prepare, resource and tailor local services.

The presentation generated a great deal of interest among delegates from across Europe, with positive feedback suggesting that the UK had 'got the model right'.

## *Planning for future demand*

**Lisa McCance, Programme Director at Shared Intelligence, gave a presentation at the December SEEC Executive on the trends that will impact on future demand and shape residents' expectations for council services. Lisa highlighted the key trends that will impact on three areas, including:**

### **Economy & employment**

South East demand for high skill workers such as professionals and senior management is rising while demand for lower skill workers such as administrators and trade workers is falling. New business opportunities and occupations are being created by the service sector's rapidly growing 'experience economy'. Younger workers express a much greater preference for flexible working.

### **Housing & infrastructure**

Home ownership is increasingly unequal and delivering social housing is a key priority for local authorities. Average commuting distances are increasing and managerial and professional workers are more likely to commute. In the past, the key driver for urban growth was industrialisation. Will post-industrial economies stimulate more growth outside of the major cities?

### **Lifestyle**

The number of people seeking help for mental health problems, learning disabilities and age related conditions such as dementia is rising rapidly.

Technology has the potential to offer new ways of delivering healthcare through health apps and even real-time health monitoring via wearable devices.

In discussion, members considered impacts on local economies, for example whether business space requirements would shrink as more people work from home. This could also mean falling business rate income, reducing councils' ability to fund services. The move towards a more hi-tech economy also increased the importance of having top quality broadband infrastructure to support local economies. At the same time trends showing reducing interest in car ownership were yet to be recognised in more rural areas of the South East.

## ***Grammars not only answer to more good school places***

**SEEC's submission to the 'Schools that work for everyone' consultation argued that more high quality school places are needed in the South East but grammar schools are not the only answer to improving educational achievement and life chances for all pupils.**

Our response cited the South East's strong track record of high performing schools – with 85% of all schools being rated good or outstanding. However South East challenges included the forecast growth of 115,000 pupils between 2014-15 and 2019-20, the need for adequate funding for local authorities and an existing skills shortage in a number of sectors.

The submission calls for Government recognition of the importance of a role for local education authorities in school provision and organisation as well as help for councils to address 7 key issues:

- Having the right mix of schools and ensuring there are sufficient high quality pupil places for both academic and vocational qualifications
- Ensuring adequate, fairer pupil and school improvement funding
- A duty for all schools to co-operate with councils to ensure they are accountable, transparent and delivering high quality education
- Providing an advice service for parents and pupils explaining the variety of educational routes available
- Providing alternatives to grammar schools, alongside any new grammars, to achieve all-round educational excellence
- The importance of a core curriculum to provide all pupils with the baseline skills they will need to access both academic and technical education
- The importance of knowledge sharing, with local flexibility for councils to bring partners together to improve schools – including linking council-maintained schools with academies and encouraging links with universities and businesses to improve pupils' employability.

## ***News Roundup***

### **January All-Member Meeting: Delivering housing & infrastructure**

SEEC's January All-Member meeting on 27 January 2017 will take the form of a special workshop '[Building Homes and Associated Infrastructure](#)'. Jointly organised by SEEC and the LGA it will be an opportunity for members to share good practice on issues such as financing housing and infrastructure for growth and delivering housing through council-led companies or partnerships. Interactive sessions will also help inform key messages to DCLG, including future SEEC submissions such as a response to the Housing White Paper expected in early 2017.

Senior councillors and officers can register for a free place by contacting: [admin@secouncils.gov.uk](mailto:admin@secouncils.gov.uk).

### **SEEC hosts discussion on planning flexibility**

An informal briefing meeting for SEEC Executive members on 1 December outlined potential planning freedoms that could be available to help councils deliver more homes. CLG advisors David Godfrey and Tim Leunig met members to discuss potential flexibility offered by the Lucas Clause (S154) of the Housing & Planning Act 2016.