

# South East First



The Newsletter of South East England Councils

July 2017

## *Greater investment in South East needed as surplus overtaken by London*

[SEEC leaders have written](#) to MPs and Ministers calling on Government to increase South East infrastructure investment, as new figures show that the South East economy is failing to deliver its full potential for UK plc. This is a major concern in the lead up to Brexit when all areas need to be adequately funded to maximise their contribution to the economy.

Data produced for SEEC by independent experts Oxford Economics shows that since 2013/14 South East net financial returns to Treasury have fallen behind London. This means the South East economy is punching below its potential in contributing to the Treasury's ability to fund infrastructure and public services UK-wide.

Over the past three years, London's net 'profit' to Treasury was £21.6bn more than the South East contribution. This is a reversal of the long term trend, which saw the South East contribute a net profit of £154.4bn from 2000/01 to 2015/16 – compared to £125.5bn from London over the same period.

The letter expressed members' view that the changing fortunes are down to different levels of public spending, including areas such as transport and enterprise/ employment investment. The new data shows a growing gap in per-capita public spending: London rose from £7,056 to £12,628 between 2000/01 and 2015/16 while the South East rose from £5,274 to £10,334.

SEEC called on Government to re-invest a fair share of our net profit in South East transport, skills and hi-tech infrastructure so we can maximise economic growth.

South East and local government media have also reported on [SEEC's call for investment](#), including coverage on BBC local radio.

## *September bid deadline for LGA Housing Advisers Programme*

**Responding to councils' ambition to make progress on housing delivery, LGA is encouraging South East authorities to bid for help through its new Housing Advisers Programme before 12 September. Launched this month, the programme gives councils the opportunity to apply for up to 20 days' independent expert support to help with projects that will deliver homes, reduce homelessness, or generate savings or revenues.**

The success of January's SEEC-LGA Building homes and funding associated infrastructure workshop demonstrated the high level of interest among South East local authorities in getting housing moving. As the housing crisis increases pressure on local authority services and budgets, there is an impressive range of innovation emerging across local government's housing activities. LGA wants to help promote, facilitate and enhance the role and capacity of local authorities to meet local housing need.

In order to provide locally-led bespoke help, LGA has launched the Housing Advisors Programme, which funds the provision of an independent adviser to support local authorities undertaking a specific project to meet the housing need of their local area. The programme will fund adviser support of up to £14,000 for each successful council application. Participating local authorities will be asked to write up their experiences in order to share learning across the sector.

Local authorities are invited to submit an application to the programme either individually, or in groups and a wide range of possible areas of support will be considered across the fields of housing, planning and addressing homelessness.

Expressions of interest are requested before Tuesday 12 September 2017 to [housingadvisers@local.gov.uk](mailto:housingadvisers@local.gov.uk). The Housing Advisors Programme prospectus and further details on how to apply are [available here](#).

## *Clarity sought over London's housing and growth plans*

**SEEC members have pressed the Deputy Mayor of London for clarity on the size of – and what he will do to address -- any possible gap between the homes London needs and what it can deliver in the draft London Plan expected later this year.**

At a Wider South East Political Steering Group (WSE PSG) on 21 July, SEEC members had a unique opportunity to discuss the Mayor's early thinking on London Plan policies to help tackle any housing gap working with councils outside London.

SEEC has previously raised concerns that London should not assume any of its unmet housing needs can be met in the South East, given existing local growth pressures and ambitions, protected land and infrastructure constraints. SEEC members emphasised the Mayor should consider every option to address housing needs within his own boundaries, including London Green Belt release – as South East councils have to do.

If there is still outstanding unmet housing need, they highlighted the Mayor must make clear what his 'offer' is (eg infrastructure investment) to councils outside London. South East councils will need to understand this before they can properly consider his proposal for any 'willing partners for growth' to come forward to help meet the capital's housing needs.

Infrastructure and tackling housing barriers also remain high priorities for joint WSE working. Following a [recent joint letter](#), SEEC members are scheduled to meet Transport Secretary Chris Grayling MP in October to discuss how Government can help support 13 key schemes (agreed by members at the 2016 WSE Summit) needed to underpin current growth plans. [A letter](#) has also been sent to new Housing Minister Alok Sharma MP, to progress discussions about how the new Government will take forward important actions to tackle housing barriers, including proposals in the recent White Paper.

## *Excellent turnout for Brexit, migration and skills workshop*

**Over 40 councillors and officers attended the 23 June SEEC-SESPM workshop to consider and discuss the potential impacts of Brexit on South East migration and skills and to learn from examples of local authority good practice.**

South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) Chairman, Cllr Paul Watkins opened the event by outlining some of the South East opportunities and challenges. Our high capacity ports and airports mean many migrants into the UK come through the South East with around 12% remaining here.

Cllr Watkins said the South East was committed to 'doing its bit' for refugees and has accepted around 10% of the 6000 people resettled in the UK to date under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (SVPRS). He cited the SVPRS as an example of a scheme that is fully funded and working well – other schemes, he said, have inconsistent funding and could learn from the Syrian programme.

Cllr Watkins also highlighted key issues relating to Brexit. He said there are questions over the future of 2 treaties with France covering migration and whether the border would remain in Calais or be moved to Dover. At this stage, he said it appears the treaties will remain in place and the UK will increase payments to France to keep the border at Calais.

Dr Carlos Vargas-Silva of the Oxford University Migration Observatory [presented a breakdown](#) of figures on migration to the South East and highlighted that numbers from EU countries were already falling, which implied there could be future skills gaps. Hampshire CC Deputy Leader, Cllr Keith Mans spoke on how councils could potentially address skills gaps by working to bring industry and LEPs closer to schools, colleges and technical institutes. He also called for single funding of skills and employment under local authority control and emphasised the need for improved careers guidance provision.

Sean Palmer, Deputy Director, Asylum & Specialist Casework at the Home Office spoke about the Home Office's priorities and the aim to apply the support arrangements for the SVPRS across other refugee schemes. He also said there had been a change in focus to acknowledge the impact refugees have on local communities and to take action to mitigate this.

Cllr Gillian Ford, LGA Asylum, Refugee and Migration Task Group member, [gave a presentation](#) on the range of programmes to support refugee and asylum seeking children, families and adults. She commended councils' support for the schemes saying that most local authorities are involved in some way but there remained concerns about the adequacy of central funding to support their work.

Tracey Kerly, Chief Executive Ashford BC [gave a presentation](#) on how her council's proactive and innovative approach had been highly successful in integrating refugees into the local community and assisting them into employment and self-sufficiency.

## ***Streamlining Britain's border security***

**The UK's ageing border control systems are unlikely to be able to cope with the extra processing that will be required after Brexit, Matthew Finn, Managing Director of security experts Augmentiq told delegates at the June Brexit, migration and skills workshop.**

Matthew said that the UK has been left with old systems that need upgrading as a result of the cancellation of the failed E-borders contract in 2010. This means that capabilities envisaged at that time are still not in place and current systems are unlikely to be able to cope, especially if the E-gates – which allow for faster processing of European Economic Area (EEA) Nationals – are closed.

He said the critical questions for border security are:

- How will EEA nationals be processed after Brexit?
- What provisions need to be in place if the processing arrangements change?
- How will the UK share information with other governments and will it still have access to European systems such as the Schengen Information System, European Arrest Warrant and Europol information system?

Matthew said that modern border control systems need to have a risk-managed approach. Only 1 in 1000 people need to be identified for further examination and high tech systems such as Advanced Passenger Information can speed up the processing of the other 999 by ensuring that their identity is confirmed before they reach the border. He cited the Australian border control systems as an

excellent example, where the carriers provide in-depth passenger information and the receiving government is able to say in real time whether or not an individual is cleared for boarding.

In the South East, ensuring freight supply chains can move freely and efficiently is critical to the economy. Matthew said that it is essential to explore how we can register the 40-50,000 freight companies, their drivers and people involved in the supply chain. This would allow systems to be in place so that when a truck arrives at port we know what it contains and who is driving it, so that it can be waved through without causing queues and adding additional processing time.

## *News Roundup*

### **New date for Wider South East Summit**

The next Wider South East Summit for council leaders and LEP chairmen will now be held on 26 January 2018 in central London. It will be an opportunity to meet the London Mayor's team during formal consultation on the new draft London Plan. The event was previously scheduled for 24 November 2017.

### **New Data Dashboard published:**

SEEC's new data dashboard has been published. Its essential figures highlight both South East success and some of the challenges we face across the key themes of economy & employment; housing & infrastructure; and demography. Newly-commissioned research for SEEC by Oxford Economics shows that while the South East contributed the highest net surplus to Treasury of £154.3bn from 2000/01 to 2015/16, our net returns have fallen £21.6bn behind London over the last 3 years. The new-format 2 page summary is [available here](#).

### **Commercialisation workshop, 8 September**

District, unitary and county councils all have an essential role in delivering the best outcomes and value for money for residents across the South East. Due to the scale of financial pressures, local authorities are having to restructure, diversify and find new ways of generating income. This workshop will look at the challenges and opportunities of commercialising services. Free for SEEC member councillors and officers, the workshop will include a variety of sessions, including Strategy and leadership, Fees and charges, Service re-design and other income streams. Contact [admin@secouncils.gov.uk](mailto:admin@secouncils.gov.uk) to reserve a place.