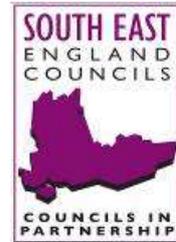


SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & ALL-MEMBER MEETING



Date: 28 June 2018

Subject: **Latest SEEC activity report and updates**

Report of: SEEC Secretariat – Heather Bolton and Nick Woolfenden

Recommendations:

- i) Note updates on SEEC's new and ongoing work to represent members' interests
- ii) Provide input on priorities for SEEC's work programme for the coming year (section a).
- iii) Provide comments on the draft Data Dashboard (section b & annex) by 10 July to nickwoolfenden@secouncils.gov.uk so it can be shared with members, Ministers & MPs.

a) **Member input on SEEC business plan priorities for 2018-19**

a.1 Member views are invited on potential areas to include in SEEC's work programme for the coming year to ensure the business plan reflects member priorities. Traditionally, the focus has been on making the case for action to support the South East role as the nation's economic powerhouse (e.g funding and powers for infrastructure, homes, skills & service delivery) and address key challenges (e.g our growing ageing population & care needs).

a.2 Topics from last year's business plan are outlined below as a starting point for discussion and to prompt member thoughts on additional opportunities, gaps or emerging topics:

i. Infrastructure and housing needs

Work with London & Wider South East – ensure the South East voice is heard in the developing new London Plan. Also joint work on transport investment & barriers to housing.

Housing & planning – argue for realistic planning reforms, achievable housing need assessments & powers for South East councils to speed up delivery of approved housing.

Infrastructure investment – help secure greater investment in South East infrastructure.

ii. Industrial strategy and the South East economy

Implementing the industrial strategy – facilitate debate on councils' role in growth.

Returns on investment – highlight the importance of the South East contribution to UK economic success and to the Treasury's ability to invest nationwide.

Brexit impacts – make the case for investment and policy changes to ensure the South East economy does not falter as a result of Brexit.

iii. South East funding, services and devolution

Funding, devolution & service sustainability – support greater funding devolution and financial reform to support more sustainable councils (e.g more control over fees and taxes)

Social care – set out options for sustainable funding & better integration of social care with NHS care.

iv. Cross cutting work

Monitor emerging policy to ensure SEEC views feed into relevant policy debates.

Data dashboard to provide an evidence base for SEEC policy proposals.

Migration – continue to host the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration, ensuring updates for members on current issues.

Communications – including monthly member/stakeholder newsletters, occasional MP briefings and Wider South East updates.

Future joint working by SEEC-SESL – consider creation of a new single organisation to represent the views of all tiers of councils in the South East.

Member engagement to shape priorities and messages to Government via SEEC's annual programme of meetings and events (3 Executive meetings and 2 themed all-member meetings).

b) **New summer 2018 Draft SEEC Data Dashboard**

b.1 **For member comment**, the draft 2-side summary of SEEC's summer 2018 Data Dashboard is attached (see Annex A). It provides evidence on key South East opportunities and challenges for members to raise with Government/ key Ministers and local MPs, to help influence funding and policy decisions. It sets out:

- The scale of issues facing the South East's public services. The South East has the UK's largest population. Increases show South East total population is now 9.2m, with 831,000 over 75s. This growth raises major challenges for councils, not least in care funding.
- South East potential for economic growth, but challenges to overcome. The South East made the largest net contribution to Treasury (£154bn between 2000/01-2015/16) and saw the 2nd largest net growth in homes (36,526 in 2016/17). However the South East also faces an infrastructure funding gap (£15.4bn by 2030) and growing unemployment (77,540 claimants in April 2018, up 18% from April 2017). With greater local funding powers and freedoms, councils could invest more to support economic growth and housing delivery, and steer funding to meet skills gaps/needs.

We welcome comments on the draft dashboard prior to finalising it for circulation to members, Ministers and MPs. Please send comments by 10 July to nickwoolfenden@secouncils.gov.uk.

c) Draft London Plan – SEEC input and work with London Mayor's office

c.1 SEEC's [response](#) to the draft London Plan was the culmination of constructive engagement between SEEC and the Mayor's office over the past year. This included a well-attended [Summit](#) with London Mayor Sadiq Khan and Political Steering Group (PSG) meetings, which helped shape the consultation draft of the London Plan.

c.2 SEEC's London Plan response welcomed the Mayor's ambition to increase house building within London, but highlighted points where clarification is needed on implications for the South East. These include:

- How the Mayor will deliver his commitment to increase London's housing delivery by 50% to meet need in its boundaries. This is crucial to avoid potential negative impacts for the South East's own local growth plans. While local circumstances vary, it cannot be assumed that South East authorities could accommodate any unmet housing needs from London.
- How the Mayor will work with SEEC/ Wider South East Political Steering Group to secure investment and national policy changes to support South East economic and community success alongside London's growth. This should include progressing joint work on mutually beneficial infrastructure priorities and tackling housing delivery barriers.
- How the Mayor's call for 'willing partners' for growth outside London will work in practice, and the need for him to define his offer (e.g funding for infrastructure/affordable homes) for any South East councils that might be able to help accommodate some of London's growth.

c.3 Following close of consultation, London Deputy Mayor Jules Pipe gave PSG an overview of the GLA's early assessment of 4,000 London Plan responses. Many South East councils' responses mirrored SEEC's points above in para c.2 above. Examination in Public is expected in winter 2018-19, with a call for written submissions summer-autumn 2018.

c.4 For the coming year, the PSG has agreed that its core priorities should continue to be the London Plan, strategic transport infrastructure (with discussions underway about links to the emerging Sub-National Transport Bodies) and tackling housing barriers. The PSG may also explore additional issues around natural resources/utilities.

d) SEEC guide to working with LEPs

d.1 SEEC has [published](#) a short South East guide and checklist to support councillor engagement with LEPs in shaping new Local Industrial Strategies (LIS) and driving economic growth. The guide builds on a SEEC member & LEP workshop. It includes a checklist to help councillors think about how they can shape and contribute to LIS – for example maximising the value of councils' place-making role and democratic accountability.

e) SEEC responses to consultation

e.1 Since March, SEEC has collated and submitted member views to seven high level consultations. This is in addition to the London Plan response (see para c.2 above). SEEC responded to the [Integrated Communities Strategy green paper](#); the [draft NPPF](#); [Supporting Housing Delivery through Developer Contributions](#); [Heathrow Airport's expansion consultation](#); a [select committee inquiry on social care](#); the [IPPR/ Lord Darzi independent review of health and care](#); and proposals for a [Major Roads Network](#).

f) SEEC member and MP briefings

f.1 This month SEEC has [written to Health and Social Care Secretary Jeremy Hunt](#), setting out member proposals for reviewing social care funding and ensuring better integration with

health services. An earlier [briefing for Housing Minister Dominic Raab](#) was produced when SEEC members met him to discuss housing and planning. SEEC also provides member briefings with South-East-focused analysis of key events. Since March, SEEC has circulated South East updates on the [May 2018 local elections](#) and the [Chancellor's Spring Statement](#). Regular monthly e-newsletters are also sent to members and stakeholders.

g) Verbal update on closer working between SEEC and SESL

g.1 Update on proposals from a SEEC member working group on potential efficiencies that could be achieved by closer working between the South East's two membership organisations.