



SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS ALL-MEMBER MEETING & WORKSHOP

Date: 1 February 2018
 Subject: **Latest SEEC activity report and updates**
 Report of: Heather Bolton & Nick Woolfenden

Recommendations:

- Note updates on SEEC's recent work
- Contact heatherbolton@secouncils.gov.uk with any queries or suggestions for future activity

Recent projects to represent SEEC member interests include work to influence the draft London Plan, infrastructure investment, housing delivery, working with LEPs and funding for migration.

a) Wider South East Summit with Sadiq Khan

- a.1 SEEC jointly hosted [a Summit on 26 January](#) giving South East local authority leaders the chance to discuss the new draft London plan with Mayor of London Sadiq Khan and Deputy Mayor Jules Pipe. Over 100 councillors and senior officers registered to attend the event organised by SEEC, GLA, East of England LGA and London Councils.
- a.2 [Consultation](#) on the draft London Plan runs until 2 March 2018. SEEC will respond and individual member councils are also encouraged to submit their views. Key points from Summit discussions will be reflected in SEEC's response, for example:
- The need for more detail about how the Mayor will meet the capital's housing needs within London's boundaries. 10-year plans suggest a gap of 1,000 homes a year and longer term targets have not yet been set.
 - Ongoing concerns that the Mayor has ruled out Green Belt development. Many South East authorities are already reluctantly reviewing Green Belt to meet local housing demand and feel the Mayor should do the same to ensure he can fully deliver London's needs.
 - Clarity about the Mayor's interest in 'willing partners' outside London as a 'long term contingency' to help accommodate some of London's housing and/ or jobs growth. More clarity is needed on the timescales involved and what benefits could be offered to encourage willing partners to come forward.
- a.3 SEEC has also taken part in a debate on how to enhance working relationships with the Mayor's office, responding to a report on collaborative working with London produced by think tanks Southern Policy Centre and Centre for London. SEEC Chairman Cllr Nicolas Heslop made the point that the report significantly undervalues the current, productive collaboration with the Mayor through the Political Steering Group and Summits. SEEC has also stressed that the majority of South East politicians do not support a return to regional planning.

b) SEEC response to National Infrastructure Assessment

- b.1 SEEC submitted a [detailed response to the draft National Infrastructure Assessment](#) in January emphasising the South East's need for investment to support growth in jobs and homes. Lack of investment in transport, broadband and essential services risks undermining councils' economic ambitions, local plan housing targets and the South East's global competitiveness.
- b.2 The response points to the fact that the South East's estimated infrastructure funding gap of £15.4bn by 2030 is only about 10% of the profits that the area's economic success has contributed to Treasury since 2000. SEEC data shows South East profitability starting to fall behind other areas, so it is important that national investment supports South East continued growth as well as investment in regeneration elsewhere. The response also calls for councils to have access to a share of national taxes collected locally to enable them to help fund local infrastructure needs.

c) Influencing Ministers and South East MPs

- c.1 Following January's Ministerial changes, SEEC [has written to new Housing Minister Dominic Raab MP](#) setting out proposals on housing delivery in the South East. The Minister has promised to respond to SEEC's letter, which covers:
- The need for a sense check of CLG's 'Right Homes in Right Places' proposed housing allocations in the South East. Current figures ignore protected land/ capacity limitations that exist in many parts of the South East and reduce housing allocations in some South East

urban areas. Housing figures are also cut in some cities in northern England, potentially undermining their plans for growth.

- SEEC's interest in Sir Oliver Letwin's review of unimplemented planning permissions, given the South East has 66,750 unused permissions. SEEC argues that powers for councils to charge developers for unbuilt permissions would encourage quicker build out.
- Potential to provide more funding for infrastructure by allowing South East councils to keep a small share of national taxes collected in their areas.

c.2 SEEC has also sent [a briefing on housing and infrastructure](#) to all South East MPs and Ministers with constituencies outside the South East.

d) Working with LEPs: A guide for councils

d.1 Following the SEEC Executive workshop on Local Industrial Strategies on 1 December, the secretariat is working with Shared Intelligence to produce a good practice guide for members. Due in spring 2018, the guide will identify areas where councillors can help tailor industrial strategy priorities to local circumstances and will include examples of current good practice in working with LEPs.

e) Funding for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)

e.1 SEEC is working with the South East Strategic Partnership with Migration (SESPM) to put forward proposals for a Home Office review of funding for councils who accept UASC. Shortfalls in current funding are contributing to South East councils' reluctance to accept children under a voluntary National Transfer Scheme, which aims to share UASC responsibilities between all county and unitary councils. SEEC and SESPM are calling on new Immigration Minister Caroline Nokes MP to ensure full reimbursement of council costs in supporting UASC and the unaccompanied children who go on to become care leavers after age 18.

e.2 SESPM is also a key partner in a successful bid to Government's Controlling Migration Fund. A grant of £156,000 was announced in January to introduce a template that will help social workers support UASC and monitor their successful integration into local communities. The grant will be spent over two years and will include a programme of training for social workers.

f) Latest SEEC data dashboard shows South East trends

f.1 SEEC's [winter 2017-18 dashboard](#) summary is now available. The dashboard illustrates key South East data and trends covering the economy, infrastructure investment, housing, demographics, unemployment and deprivation.