

SEEC work programme/action plan for 2010-11

Based on output from workshop on 15 October 2010

1. New principles

1. Strive for a fair funding deal for the South East

Making the case for fairer national funding settlements for South East Councils and maximising councils' access to EU funding opportunities.

2. Promote the South East's position as a leading global economy

Making the case for strategic infrastructure and investment needs to maintain the South East's international competitiveness, including joint working with business.

3. Act as single democratic voice for South East interests

Representing all tier and cross-boundary views to Government, maintaining dialogue with neighbouring areas such as London and East of England, and representing South East local government interests on external bodies.

4. Monitor the pulse of the South East

Tracking data to illustrate South East successes and pressure points in delivering effective local services and supporting economic growth, including a focus on areas such as home building, affordable housing, economic trends and impact of migration.

2. Updated objectives

- Be the democratic voice for all tiers of South East local government.
- Provide a framework for member-led co-ordinated action on issues of common concern such as the economy, investment and funding.
- Maintain an overview of key data and trends across the 74 South East councils to inform strategic needs.
- Maintaining a flow of member and external communications on SEEC's work.

3. Delivering on principles and objectives

We will deliver work on each of these priority topics via a number of mechanisms. These will include:

- Building relationships & dialogue with ministers to raise awareness of South East needs, using a strong evidence base to support our case.
- Building relationships with external organisations to create a strong joint voice for joint concerns.
- Maximising use of limited resources by drawing on existing officer expertise in councils to provide policy support and evidence base to help members make the case for the South East.
- Managing a programme of meetings to ensure strong member input, backed up by a communications programme for members and external audiences to raise the profile of SEEC priorities.

4. Priority topics

In 2010-11 SEEC will focus its work in the following areas:

- Economy - the case for investing in the South East and joint work with LEPs on strategic infrastructure eg broadband.
- Housing – delivering through localism and community planning.
- Migration – Impact of migration on local services.
- Europe – raising awareness of EU funding opportunities for South East councils.
- Finance – a fair funding deal for South East Councils (*suggest this could be joint with SESL*).
- Transport - making the case for major South East transport projects that will support UK-wide economic growth (*suggest this could be joint with SESL*).

5. Action Plan

5.1 Member involvement

Aim: Ensure member input and involvement to SEEC through a regular programme of meetings, workshops, task & finish groups and news updates.

- Deliver an annual programme of member meetings, comprising four Executive meetings, two all-member meetings and one annual all-member conference to agree SEEC's position on priority issues.
- Establish a minimum of two member task and finish groups to direct work on priority topics. Task and finish groups would be drawn from the full SEEC membership, chaired by an Executive Committee member and report to the SEEC Executive. Suggested topics for 2010-11 are:
 - Developing the South East dashboard – key data to be collected to monitor the pulse of the South East economy and local service delivery.
 - Delivering housing through the localist agenda that co-ordinates with upper tier services.
 - Maximising access to EU funding across the South East.
- Deliver a programme of member and external communications to raise awareness of SEEC work areas, including:
 - At least four member newsletters per year.
 - A regularly updated website, redesigned to reflect priorities set out in para 3 above.
 - Media relations work on output from key SEEC projects.
- Nominate SEEC members to represent the South East on external bodies, such as LGA and other relevant committees and organisations.
- Work with SESL Chairman and members to ensure the two organisations' work programmes are complementary and avoid duplication.

5.2 Resources

Aim: ensure SEEC has resources to support the work programme and provide policy advice to members on specialist areas. Key actions will be:

- Establish an officer network to provide specialist policy advice to SEEC members on the priority areas set out in para 3 above. This will help SEEC staff provide members with bottom up evidence to argue for a fair deal for the South East.
- Recruit two secondees to help deliver the SEEC work programme, one administrative post and one post with responsibility for co-ordinating policy input.
- Explore free support/ secondments from organisations such as SEEDA/ GOSE to aid transition of responsibilities to local government.

5.3 Economy

Aim: maintain an overview of the South East as the UK's most successful economy and work jointly with the business sector as a strong, single voice to make the case for strategic needs.

- Invite LEP chairmen to a future SEEC Executive committee to discuss the way forward for joint working on strategic priorities.
- Aim to gain agreement to a high level SEEC/LEP forum, meeting three times a year to identify, agree and influence delivery of strategic priorities affecting the UK's most profitable economy.
- Develop a joint SEEC/business campaign on broadband to secure swift delivery of next generation broadband across the South East.

5.4 Housing

Aim: Ensure Government understands what SEEC members need to be able to deliver housing to support economic growth.

- Organise a SEEC housing conference on overcoming barriers to delivery of new homes, targeting ministerial attendance.

- Establish a task and finish group on delivering housing to agree how different tiers will work together to deliver strategic needs and fund infrastructure and services to support new homes.
- Meet CLG minister(s) to contribute SEEC views on new housing and respond to consultation on new policies such as the impact of a proposed benefits cap on housing need, changes to the housing revenue account, delivery of affordable homes and the new homes bonus.

5.5 Europe

Aim: Provide information to help South East councils identify potential for attracting EU grant funding.

- Establish a task and finish group on EU priorities to agree how SEEC should use its resources on EU matters, links with the LGA role and any gaps that SEEC may need to fill after closure of SEEDA and GOSE – for example providing information on access to European funding streams, the role of LEPs in attracting EU funding and building dialogue with the European Commission to influence future allocation of EU funds to the South East.
- Establish a regular mechanism to feed information to Committee of the Regions members to enable them to make the case for the South East in Brussels.
- Meet South East MEP(s) to build relationships and support MEPs in making the case for South East needs.
- Invite a leading South East MEP to address a SEEC all-member meeting on funding opportunities and EU priorities for funding projects.

5.6 Finance

Aim: Ensure the South East councils' case for fairer funding is understood by national Government.

- Commission independent report on per capita funding and return on investment in the South East relative to other areas of the country.
- Make the case for fundamental reform of local government finance to replace the current failing system.
- Meet ministers to make the case for reform to deliver fairer funding for the South East and contribute views to consultations on proposed changes to local government financing.

5.7 Transport

Aim: Ensure Government understands South East transport needs and the UK-wide economic benefits of improvements in the South East. Work with neighbouring areas to raise awareness of common issues.

- Meet transport ministers to discuss councils' input into future prioritisation & decision making for cross boundary, strategic projects. Also stressing the importance of SE transport to support the economy of the rest of the UK.
- Meet GLA, Mayor and TFL Board SE representatives to ensure London understands the impact of transport decisions on the South East.
- Work with LEPs to support the case for major transport projects that will deliver significant economic benefits.

5.8 Migration

Aim: Track the impact of migration on provision & funding of local authority services and the wider South East economy in areas such as skills and housing.

- Monitor trends in migration and cost impact for services via regular reports to SEEC Executive.
- Co-ordinate work to share best practice on migration issues via the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) and its network of council officers.
- Contribute views on migration to Government through SEEC and/ or SESPM on major issues and consultations.

5.9 Monitoring the pulse of the South East

Aim: Maintain oversight of key South East data and trends as an evidence base to inform strategic needs.

- Create a monitoring 'dashboard' to maintain an overview of key data and trends across the 74 South East councils to inform strategic needs.
- Use key data as evidence base to inform views to Government and other external organisations when making the case for South East needs or in responding to consultations on topics including housing completions, employment land, GVA, economic trends and impact of migration.

5.10 Relationships and influencing

Aim: Develop a programme for SEEC's leadership to build effective, influential relationships with MEPs, ministers and colleagues in external organisations to create a strong joint voice for South East needs.

- Meetings with ministers, MEPs and external organisations such as European Commission and outgoing quangos on SEEC's priority topics (eg economy, housing, EU, transport, finance).
- Maximise value of South East membership of the LGA Executive and other LGA committees by building relationships with leading LGA members to ensure agendas are relevant to South East priorities.
- Meetings with South East business representatives – for example with representatives from all South East LEAs.
- Creating a regular forum to meet GLA, London Councils and East of England LGA elected members. This could be joint with SESL.
- Create a database of SEEC members' ministerial and MP contacts to assist work to build effective relationships.