

SEEC business plan Sept 2016- Sept 2017

Meeting dates 2016-17

2016 Executive meetings: Fri 30 September; Thur 1 December. Also WSE summit Fri 9 December.
Provisional 2017 Executives: Fri 24 March; Fri 13 October; Fri 1 December.
Provisional 2017 All member meetings: Fri 27 January; Fri 23 June AGM.

Meeting format

Position All member meetings as themed topical workshops related to South East policy priorities. [For example: infrastructure & housing barriers; business rates & funding; migration, commercialisation; next steps on devolution]. These meetings are likely to replace some of the separate conferences organised in previous years. This will assist in making better use of members' diaries and SEEC resources. The format will include interactive sessions wherever possible and will open up attendance to relevant cabinet members in addition to Leaders. SEEC specific business sessions such as AGM elections will be scheduled as pre-meets to the themes workshops.

The format of Executive meetings will continue to centre around one or two key discussion topics relevant to the emerging policy agenda.

Main theme option 1: Funding & economic value post Brexit

1. Business rates as core local government funding

Aim to ensure need assessments reflect SE challenges and that the new system adequately incentivises SE growth as the economic engine room of the UK in a post Brexit economy:

- Input to Government, Parliamentarians and LGA to influence development of the new system during consultation and progress of the Local Jobs & Growth Bill.
- Influence and inform MPs on priority SE issues for business rate reform.
- Regular updates/discussions for members to ensure SEEC work reflects SE concerns.
- Make the case for action on SE key issues, eg incentives, risk, linking extra responsibilities to economic growth not demand-led costs such as attendance allowances, equal powers for areas without elected mayors, impact of SE demographics on funding need, future of the central list.

2. Value SE economy/ return on investment/ EU funding

Aim to raise awareness of the SE potential to drive UK success/ return on investments as the economy adjusts to Brexit:

- Consider external research/ publication of report to update SE economic performance data.
- Make the case to Ministers/ SE MPs for the national value of investing in SE economic growth, including input in advance of the new Chancellor's autumn statement.
- Make the case for funding sources to replace EU grants post Brexit (Euro 490m over 7 years).

Main theme option 2: Essentials for sustainable growth

3. Infrastructure investment

Aim to help SE local authorities secure greater investment in infrastructure:

- Publish external review/ recommendations on infrastructure funding options.
- Prepare proposals for Ministers/ MPs/ National Infrastructure Commission on how funding freedoms for SE councils could support economic growth.
- Build on 2016 Missing Links report with new DfT team/National Infrastructure Commission to argue for investment in specific strategic transport needs.
- Make the case for infrastructure investment that will be needed following any Govt decision on a new runway in the SE.
- Explore SEEC's potential role in an all-tier SE Sub National Transport Body.
- Consider report on benefits of skills devolution, including SE case studies on all tier role in shaping skills for economic growth.

4. Housing barriers

Aim to help SE authorities overcome barriers that are holding back planned housing development:

- Publish SE report on housing barriers and potential solutions, including case studies.
- Via bespoke work and consultation input, make the case to new Ministerial team and SE MPs for policy changes to allow councils greater ability to incentivise development of approved planning permissions.

5. Wider South East liaison

Aim to work with London Mayor, London Councils and East of England on shared infrastructure needs and to ensure the SE voice is heard in development of the new London Plan:

- Deliver focused, relevant political steering group meetings that help members agree joint actions to influence Government on policy and investment decisions affecting the WSE, particularly on housing & infrastructure.
- Arrange and promote an interactive summit to give SE councillors the opportunity to influence the emerging new London Plan.
- Ensure SE views are presented during formal consultation on the London Plan.

Main theme option 3: Devolved powers

Aim to make the case for greater devolution of funding and powers:

- Make the case to Ministers to allow councils greater control over fees and charges so commercialisation can make services self funding. Potential to prepare/ publish SE case studies.
- Member debate on what additional powers/ responsibilities should be devolved to local government post Brexit to prevent greater centralisation in England. Debate would inform input to Ministers and the LGA, which holds a local government seat in the negotiating team.
- As policies emerge, review relevance of possible member debate on next steps for devolution and whether SEEC should prepare a briefing for Ministers and MPs on what would make devolution more accessible for SE authorities.

Main theme option 4: Health & Care

Aim to make the case for greater involvement from SE local authorities in integration:

- Consider whether and how SEEC could further the case for all-tier involvement in health & care.
- Consider whether there is anything specific on STPs that would benefit from SEEC work.

Cross cutting projects

- Updates for members on migration (Syrian resettlement/ wider asylum dispersal/ UASC). Also regional co-ordination role for placement of Syrian refugees/ UASC.
- Data dashboard. Produced in house twice yearly as evidence base for SEEC input to Ministers/ consultation responses & similar work.
- Regular monitoring of policy announcements to ensure SEEC voice is represented in relevant consultations and to provide members with SE-specific briefings on major events such as the Budget, Queen's speech etc.
- Communications. Monthly member/ MP/ stakeholder newsletter, occasional Wider South East newsletter, news releases, by-lined articles, case studies, website.