

Report to: **Audit, Best Value and Community Services Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **9 November 2011**

By: **Chief Executive**

Title of report: **South East Seven Partnership**

Purpose of report: **To provide the Committee with an update on the progress of the South East Seven partnership and the next steps**

RECOMMENDATION:

The Committee is recommended to note the activities and update of the South East Seven (SE7) partnership.

1. Financial Implications

1.1 There are no financial implications directly associated with this report. The individual workstreams and activities of the partnership will identify savings and efficiencies as plans are progressed and implemented.

2. Background

2.1 As the Committee will be aware, the SE7 is a partnership of seven Councils (Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council, Hampshire County Council, Kent County Council, Medway Council, Surrey County Council and West Sussex County Council) that have committed to work together to improve the quality of services and to achieve savings.

2.2 Cabinet Members and Chief Officers represent the Council at SE7 meetings and are working to deliver maximum benefits for the County Council in the following priority areas:

- Special Educational Needs (SEN);
- ICT;
- Waste;
- Highways;
- Commodities procurement; and
- Property asset management.

2.3 Where appropriate and as part of the individual workstreams, the activities and benefits of SE7 will be discussed with District and Borough Councils.

2.4 The work of SE7 is aligned to the principle of supporting and maintaining healthy local markets for small businesses.

3. Update on Progress

3.1 Updates on the six active workstreams were given to Leaders and Chief Executives at the last SE7 meeting on 20 September 2011 (details on all of the workstreams, their objectives and progress are attached as Appendix 1).

3.1 The September 2011 meeting of SE7 Leaders and Chief Executives provided an increased sense of momentum as update papers outlined future work and demonstrated

that savings and service improvements have already been achieved by some workstreams. Workstreams have been asked to include estimates of savings achieved to date and projected savings for the next three years (2012/13 to 2014/15) in updates to be presented at the SE7 meeting in December 2011.

3.2 The SE7 'brand' and reputation is attracting significant national attention. Workstreams are building strong relationships across the partnership, and also with central Government departments and bodies. Growing confidence in the innovation of the workstreams is reflected through the opportunities that the SE7 has achieved to pioneer new ways of delivering services, through the SEN, Waste and Highways workstreams. SE7 is offering collective expertise and enthusiasm to national programmes, demonstrating that the partnership is serious about supporting central Government in exploring the future of public sector service delivery.

3.3 The workstream plans are progressing and targets are starting to be articulated. As part of the internal performance management measures, SE7 targets will be set out in the Council Plan 2012/13.

4. Next steps

4.1 Preparation will continue for the next milestone SE7 meeting in December 2011, to which Baroness Hanham, Parliamentary under Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government, has confirmed attendance. Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman of the LGA and Leader of The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, may also attend the meeting.

4.2 The County Council is co-ordinating an SE7 exercise to consider the impact of the 'London effect' on the sub-region, and, if appropriate, this issue will be raised with Baroness Hanham at the December SE7 meeting.

4.3 The workstreams continue to develop their action plans and will update on progress, including financial savings estimates, at the next full SE7 meeting in December 2011.

4.4 Where decisions need to be made which impact on service delivery across the Council, formal endorsement will be sought through Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources and other relevant governance mechanisms.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The work of the SE7 continues to progress well and the quantification of potential collaborative activity and anticipated savings will highlight the importance of this strategic partnership in achieving service improvements and delivering efficiency savings.

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Background Papers

None

APPENDIX 1

Workstream updates were presented at the SE7 meeting on 20 September 2011.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) – Led by East Sussex County Council

Workstream purpose – work collaboratively in pursuit of value for money efficiencies and service improvements through piloting proposals to reform the SEN system and by building a closer operational partnership between the SE7 Councils.

Workstream update – the workstream has been accepted on all available national Pathfinder opportunities for SEN reform (resulting from the Special Educational Needs and Disability Green Paper), which began in October 2011 and is scheduled to run to March 2013 with a possible extension for a further two years. The SE7 is the largest successful Pathfinder. This is a real Pathfinder opportunity – the Green Paper sets out the case for and principles of reform but it is for our local areas to work with our parents and children to try out different approaches and ways to improve the system. The SE7 is in the forefront of developing new ideas and testing whether they make things better for children, young people and their families. In addition to Pathfinder activity, shorter term projects have been developed to increase operational collaboration and efficiency.

ICT – Led by Brighton and Hove City Council

Workstream purpose – identification of collaborative opportunities. There is focus on different ICT aspects including Network Development, Procurement, Data Centres, Desktops/Mobile and Flexible Working and Customer Contact.

Workstream update – procurement activity and work on the Network of Networks aspect of the workstream are progressing well and have high potential in relation to achieving goals. The workstream has made tangible progress and has already produced savings. Cloud working within SE7 is being considered and a position statement is being prepared.

Waste – Led by Kent County Council

Workstream purpose – creation of a long-term vision for waste and the scoping of both short and long-term savings. Consideration will be given to opportunities for two tier working, planning for regional infrastructure and monitoring and maintenance of closed landfill sites. It seeks to achieve waste prevention and minimisation by changing views of waste so that waste materials are regarded as a resource, an economic opportunity and an opportunity for social enterprise.

Workstream update – the span of activity is widely embraced by Central Government and bodies, and has received a commitment of resources to facilitate proposed changes. The SE7 approach has been showcased as a case study in the Government's Waste Policy Review (published in June 2011). The work is currently in the Development Phase (July to December 2011); with recommendations and a business case due for completion by January 2012, to position the workstream for delivery.

Highways – Led by Surrey County Council

Workstream purpose – creation of a strong joint Client group to share information, identify opportunities and develop sustainable solutions to the maintenance and construction of Highways.

Workstream update – the workstream is progressing well and is engaging with the Department for Transport in a number of areas, which has secured resources and raised the profile of the SE7. Benchmarking of costs and performance is progressing. Areas for collaborative procurement have been identified, with a Supplier Conference in September 2011 to commence contract discussions. Shared services and resources are being explored. Long term investment in skills is a focus, through the development of the work based MSc in Highway engineering, due to start in February 2012.

Commodities Procurement – Led by Hampshire County Council

Workstream purpose – to identify areas for potential joint commodity procurement within the SE7 Councils where the strength of the ‘single voice’ can provide enhanced negotiation powers.

Workstream update – the workstream continues to scope how the SE7 can collaborate in three key areas of procurement: Temporary Agency Staff, Community Meals and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The group will look to consider Social Care temporary agency staff as part of this work.

Property Asset Management – Led by Hampshire County Council

Workstream purpose – opportunities to improve efficiency are being explored in relation to reducing buildings, associated costs and re-thinking work practices.

Workstream update – East Sussex, Kent, Surrey and West Sussex County Councils have all been successful in being accepted on Wave 2 of the Capital and Assets Pathfinder programme. Hampshire County Council is a Wave 1 Pathfinder. The pathfinder bids were submitted by the individual Authorities (with local partners). The workstream will benefit from this activity, as it provides the opportunity to propose an overall target for SE7 Authorities for asset rationalisation, based on the business cases that will be developed under the programme. The workstream lead officer will present progress and a business plan at the meeting in December 2011.

Claim Centres/ External Audit/ Pension Administration – Led by Kent County Council

Workstream update -

- Kent and Surrey County Councils to discuss how joint activity in relation to an SE7-wide approach to managing insurance claims can progress;
- Work relating to External Audits is on hold awaiting possible change as a result of the consultation on The Future of Local Public Audit. A collective response to the consultation has been submitted (deadline was 30 June 2011); and
- Work to look at how Pensions Administration can be combined into one SE7 sub-regional team will be explored once the announcements of the Hutton Review have been considered fully.

Further areas of shared ideas:

- Leaders have approved proposals for a SE7 benchmarking exercise that adds value while not duplicating existing activity. The SE7 benchmarking group will assess current benchmarking activity and will be the 'first port of call' for SE7 Councils with a need for unit cost or performance data benchmarking. This exercise, led by East Sussex County Council, will focus on SE7 Council priorities including the current workstreams and further areas of need (including Fleet Management and Adult Social Care services);
- Leaders have agreed a protocol for the provision of legal advice to the partnership through 'Lead Project Lawyers' and a 'Virtual Legal Support Team', as developed by the SE7 Assistant Directors of Legal Services; and
- In September 2011 Leaders agreed to the sharing of best practice across the SE7 in relation to the Local Government Pension Scheme and approaches to Academies, services to schools and future models.