

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date: **13 October 2015**

By: **Chief Executive**

Title of report: **South East Seven (SE7) Update**

Purpose of report: **To provide an update on the SE7 partnership**

Cabinet is recommended to note the update of the SE7 partnership.

1. Position Statement

1.1 The most recent SE7 Leaders' Board meeting of Leaders and Chief Executives took place on 18 September 2015 and the notes of the meeting are attached as Appendix 1.

1.2 As a number of new members have joined the Board (including Leaders), the meeting was used as an opportunity to share and discuss the key issues facing the partnership area as a whole or its individual member Councils.

1.3 The following issues, challenges and opportunities were raised and discussed by the Leaders' Board:

1.3.1 Devolution – an update was shared on the work taking place nationally and, specifically, across the SE7 to pursue three separate devolution deals with Government (East and West Sussex and Surrey [as the Three Southern Counties], the Greater Brighton Economic Board and Hampshire and the Isle of Wight).

The discussion included the need to ensure that the three bids are complementary, promote a consistent South East message and do not compete with each other.

The need to engage and work with partners including District and Borough Councils, the LEPs and local MPs, amongst others, was agreed as a priority for the success of any devolution work.

An update on the Three Southern Counties devolution deal with Government was reported to Cabinet in September 2015 and further updates will be reported as the detailed discussions take place over the coming months.

1.3.2 Refugees and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) – the discussion focused on the local issue of refugees and UASC arriving at ports in the SE7 area and the announcement last month by the Prime Minister that Britain would resettle up to 20,000 Syrian refugees over the remainder of this Parliament (until May 2020).

The specific implications for Kent County Council caused by the volume of UASC (and young adults who had arrived as UASC) arriving at Dover was acknowledged, as was the broader issue for the rest of the South East with the potential for multiple points of entry across the area.

The Board recognised the need for a national response to the ongoing situation. The SE7 will, therefore, write to Government to request clarity for planning and to understand the long-term implications.

1.4 The Board also considered an update on the pilot Council Tax Collection project (undertaken by Medway Council) and the pilot Care Debt project (undertaken by Surrey County Council) with the support of the Behavioural Insights Team. Both pilot projects are at the analysis stage and the early results indicate a positive improvement in rates of Council Tax collection and care debt repayments. The results of the pilot projects will be shared with the SE7 Leaders' Board at their next meeting on 18 January 2016. Any lessons will be shared across the partnership and, for the Council Tax Collection pilot, with District and Borough Councils across the area.

2. Next Steps

2.1 As a number of SE7 partners are undertaking work to explore the infrastructure deficit within their area, it was agreed that there would be benefit in considering this work across the whole of the partnership. The relevant Directors across the SE7 will work together to identify the best way to calculate and present the infrastructure deficit across the whole of the SE7, including a greater understanding of demand on utilities.

2.2 A piece of work will be undertaken on the community resilience/Co-operative Council model to understand what opportunities exist for the SE7 Councils.

2.3 The results of both pieces of work will be shared with the SE7 Leaders' Board at their next meeting on 18 January 2016.

2.4 Where decisions need to be made which impact ESCC, formal endorsement will be sought through Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources and other relevant governance mechanisms.

Becky Shaw
Chief Executive

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SOUTH EAST SEVEN (SE7) MEETING

Friday 18 September 2015

Attendance

Members

- Cllr. Matthew Balfour, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, Kent County Council
- Cllr. Keith Glazier, Leader, East Sussex County Council (Chairman)
- Cllr. Louise Goldsmith, Leader, West Sussex County Council
- Cllr. Alan Jarrett, Leader, Medway Council
- Cllr. Peter Martin, Deputy Leader, Surrey County Council
- Cllr. Warren Morgan, Leader, Brighton & Hove City Council
- Cllr. Roy Perry, Leader, Hampshire County Council (Vice-Chairman)

Officers

- Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director Growth, Environment and Transport, Kent County Council
- Neil Davies, Chief Executive, Medway Council
- Trevor Pugh, Strategic Director for Environment and Infrastructure, Surrey County Council
- Geoff Raw, Acting Chief Executive, Brighton & Hove City Council
- Becky Shaw, Chief Executive, East Sussex County Council
- Gill Steward, Chief Operating Officer, West Sussex County Council
- Lee Banner, Policy Officer, East Sussex County Council
- Indea Cadman-Rivers, Policy Development Officer, East Sussex County Council

Apologies

- Cllr. Paul Carter CBE, Leader, Kent County Council
- David Cockburn, Corporate Director of Strategic and Corporate Services, Kent County Council
- Cllr. David Hodge, Leader, Surrey County Council
- David McNulty, Chief Executive, Surrey County Council
- Cllr. John Simmonds, Deputy Leader, Kent County Council
- Andrew Smith, Chief Executive, Hampshire County Council

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| 1. | Introduction and Minutes of last meeting |
| 1.1 | Cllr. Glazier welcomed everybody to the meeting and everyone introduced themselves. |
| 1.2 | The Board AGREED the minutes of the last meeting of 15 May 2015. |
| 2. | Sharing of Big Issues/Challenges facing each Council |
| 2.1 | <p>Due to recent new projects, activities and Board members (including new Leaders), it was agreed that the key issues and challenges affecting the SE7 authorities would be discussed. Each Council highlighted their specific focuses.</p> <p>There was considerable overlap amongst authorities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The devolution agenda; • The current refugee situation; • Ongoing budget challenges and decreasing resources (financial sustainability); • Funding of social care and the current particular strains on Adult Social Care (demographic commonalities across the SE7) and Children's Services; • Housing; • The infrastructure deficit; • Engaging Government/County Councils Network, especially regarding fairer funding • Aviation (following the recommendation of the Airports Commission in July 2015); • Forthcoming Police and Crime Commissioner elections (5 May 2016) and possible changes to the governance of Fire and Rescue Services; • The impact of the national living wage; • Cllr. Goldsmith particularly thanked partners for their help and support over the Shoreham Aircrash. The good working and relationships between authorities, including the commitment of staff from all sectors, was commended; • Cllr. Morgan highlighted the City Council's focus on promoting apprenticeships; and • Cllr. Balfour provided an update on the ongoing difficulties Kent County Council, its partners and the county are facing with regard to Operation Stack (the procedure used by Kent Police and the Port of Dover to park lorries on the M20 motorway in Kent when services across the English Channel are disrupted). It was AGREED that the SE7 would respond to any requests for evidence regarding cases when businesses are impacted as a result of Operation Stack and the SE7 authorities AGREED to help where possible. |
| 3. | Devolution Activity Update |
| 3.1 | Becky introduced the item and acknowledged the fast pace of devolution at present. A paper was circulated which outlined the latest position of The Cities |

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| | and Local Government Devolution Bill 2015/16 and Government expectations for the devolution deals across the country. |
| 3.2 | <p>The SE7 Councils submitted proposals for three separate bids to Government by the deadline of 4 September 2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Southern Counties (East Sussex, Surrey and West Sussex County Councils); • Greater Brighton Economic Board (Adur and Worthing Councils, Brighton & Hove City Council, Lewes District Council and Mid-Sussex District Council); and • Hampshire County Council, Isle of Wight Council, Portsmouth and Southampton City Councils. |
| 3.3 | <p>There was a discussion and the authorities updated the Board on progress with their devolution plans. It was noted that it was important to promote a consistent message for the south east covering the inter-county issues and ensuring that Councils were not competing with each other.</p> <p>It was noted that the SE7 would have significant strength lobbying as a single entity, allowing for greater influence and the prioritisation of local issues. The requirement for coordination with MPs was also acknowledged.</p> |
| 4. | Update on SE7 Collaboration with the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) |
| 4.1 | <p>Neil Davies introduced this item. The paper provided an update on the two pilot projects taking place across the SE7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax Collection project – led by Medway Council; and • Care Debt project – led by Surrey County Council. |
| 4.2 | Both Neil Davis and Trevor Pugh confirmed that their respective authorities and BIT are currently undertaking analysis of the pilots, but the early results indicate an improvement. It was confirmed that the two pilot projects would be developed and AGREED that any lessons would be shared across the partnership. |
| 4.3 | A further update report will be circulated for the SE7 Leaders' Board meeting in January 2016. |
| 5. | Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children |
| 5.1 | Cllr. Balfour and Barbara Cooper introduced this item and emphasised the current strain being caused by the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children entering Kent. |
| 5.2 | It was recognised that there needs to be a national, coordinated approach to this problem. It was AGREED that SE7 would be appropriate to make some representation to Central Government, requesting clarity for planning and to allow SE7 to understand the long-term implications. The long-term benefits of migrants were acknowledged. |
| 5.3 | It was AGREED that Becky Shaw and Barbara Cooper will draft a letter to Government regarding the current issue of refugees, acknowledging the potential for multiple points of entry within the south east. |
| 6. | Sharing, Learning and Improvement |
| 6.1 | The Board discussed issues across the SE7 authorities that could be effectively dealt with by the partnership and how shared learning could be facilitated. |
| 6.2 | As the devolution agenda progresses, the SE7 Leaders' Board will discuss the |

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| | <p>opportunities faced.</p> <p>It was AGREED that should the devolution bids not be successful, many of the issues would remain and a common approach to lobbying Government would be beneficial.</p> |
| 6.3 | <p>It was noted that Kent and Medway, West Sussex, Surrey and East Sussex were all undertaking work on infrastructure deficits. It was AGREED to ask the relevant Directors to propose to the Chief Executives' Board next meeting how best to calculate and present the infrastructure deficit across the whole of the SE7 including a greater understanding of demand on utilities.</p> |
| 6.4 | <p>Cllr. Morgan spoke about the Co-operative Council model within Brighton & Hove which comprises devolution at a sub-authority/community level, devolved budgets and empowering neighbourhoods. Other Councils may refer to this as community resilience. It was AGREED that the SE7 Chief Executives' Board would discuss the Co-operative Council model and community resilience at their next meeting (29 October 2015) and it would be tabled for the next SE7 Leaders' Board.</p> |
| 6.5 | <p>Waste was proposed as a future item for discussion, including recycling and the SE7's ability to achieve EU targets. It was AGREED that Waste and Recycling would be included on a future SE7 Leaders' Board meeting.</p> |
| 7. | Next Meeting |
| 7.1 | <p>The date of the next meeting of SE7 Leaders' Board is 10.30am - 12.30pm, 18 January 2016, Sofitel Gatwick.</p> |