

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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### A. Background

1. Following a first Summit in March 2015 for all council leaders and LEPs across the Wider South East (WSE – including London, East and South East England), five well-attended Roundtable discussions took place in July and September 2015. Independently facilitated by Phil Swann (from consultancy Shared Intelligence), they discussed how best to progress discussion about future co-ordination/co-operation on strategic issues of common concern (see *Annex 1 for further information*). Leaders from all councils and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) representatives in the South East and East were invited, with around 80 attending. Today's second WSE Summit was arranged to consider the Roundtable findings and agree the way forward. Attendees of all Roundtable sessions supported the need for political engagement.
  2. Agreement is sought on recommendations based on the three main areas of agreement at the roundtables:
    - the form of any new collaboration arrangements between East of England, South East and London;
    - priority areas of mutual concern; and
    - next steps for developing proposals for joint action on priority shared issues.
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### B. Agreement on new collaboration arrangements between East of England, South East and London

3. The following has emerged as a consensus from the political Roundtables, as identified by the independent facilitator:

*The principal purpose of the new arrangements established under the aegis of the 'Wider South East (WSE) Summit' would be to address high-level, cross-boundary planning and investment issues facing the area which are of wider importance than those addressed by existing partnerships and organisations, with an initial priority on those associated with housing need and transport investment to underpin economic prosperity.*

*The geographical area for co-operation would cover London, the East and South East of England, with the possible addition of detailed work addressing specific strategic themes or areas such as corridors or clusters of settlements.*

*The new arrangements would be bureaucratically 'light touch' and in their working as far as possible draw on existing organisations or groupings, notably East of England LGA, South East England Councils (SEEC) and the Mayor of London and his partners.*

4. It is recommended that the components be made up of:
  - 4.1. **An inclusive annual or, if necessary, more frequent Summit drawn from all the authorities and LEPs in the WSE.** The role of the Summit would be to provide strategic direction and approval for the activities of the executive political Steering Group (below). It is also an opportunity for communicating to the WSE the activities of the Steering Group. The next Summit would be planned for Autumn 2016, following election of new Mayor of London.

- 4.2. **A small all-tier executive political Steering Group with geographical and cross party political representation from across the WSE**, with members nominated by East of England LGA, SEEC and the Mayor of London to address more specifically the broad matters identified by the Summit. Envisaged to meet 2-3 times a year it would propose key issues for Summits, oversee progress on key actions, and advise on the need for any working groups.
- 4.3. If agreed at today's Summit, nominations will be sought through East of England LGA, SEEC and the Mayor of London for a maximum of *five* Steering Group members from each and establish its terms of reference and organisational arrangements including meetings. The Steering Group will be accountable to the annual Summit and constituent nominating bodies.
- 4.4. **The political Steering Group will identify the need for any thematically and/or geographically focused working groups** building on existing groupings to address specific issues.
- 4.5. **A geographically representative officer group to service the needs of the Summit and its Steering Group/any working groups.** This should build on the existing Strategic Spatial Planning Officer Liaison Group (SSPOLG). The political Steering Group will review the functions, terms of reference and membership of the existing officer group (SSPOLG) with a view to seeking nominations for officer representatives each from the East and South East of England and London.
- 4.6. **Establish an effective network to underpin communications between these different components.**

#### **Recommendation 1:**

- **Endorse the proposed collaboration arrangements for an annual (or if necessary more frequent) Summit for all WSE councils/Mayor of London/LEPs and a smaller political Steering Group, to 'go live' as soon as possible in early 2016, comprised of five representatives each from East of England LGA, SEEC and the Mayor of London.**
- **Endorse the arrangements for officer support for these political processes.**

### **C. Priority areas of common concern**

5. Members at the Roundtables were keen to see tangible action swiftly, and four specific issues with potential for strategic collaboration and early joint action have emerged from the Roundtable sessions for consideration by the Summit.
6. **Member views are invited at the Summit to help agree and – given limited resources - prioritise the focus of early actions.** The Steering Group will then develop more detailed proposals for action. The following are suggested for discussion:

#### **6.1. Preparation and timing for the full review of the London Plan**

A full review of the London Plan is likely to be requested by any new London Mayor (election in May 2016). A programme of technical research to underpin its development is emerging. Effective engagement with the WSE during the development of the plan will be important given the potential implications across the area, including for example growth options inside or outside London's boundaries, such as those being explored at a high level through the Mayor's Outer London Commission (OLC). The OLC's final report is expected in March 2016 - initial indications are that it will suggest the Mayor looks at a range of options for meeting London's growth in its boundaries, as well as considering working across the WSE to identify

new growth corridors outside London for inclusion in the review of the London Plan. The indicative timetable is:

- May 2016: New London Mayor
- Autumn 2016: London Plan initial high-level consultation
- Autumn 2017: London Plan consultation draft
- 2018/19: Earliest new London Plan Examination in Public
- 2019/20: Publish new London Plan at the latest.

## **6.2. Common understanding of data / evidence base**

During the summer 2015 Roundtables, priority topics for initial collaboration were identified as housing and transport/infrastructure to underpin economic prosperity. A number of councillors highlighted the need for a common understanding of the technical evidence on priority issues as a key area of work for the WSE. Officers were asked to begin to scope this, building on work underway by SSPOLG. It was agreed that a short note (see *Annex 2*) should be produced on the possible actions to establish that shared understanding, taking account of the timescales relevant to the technical evidence required for the Full Review of the London Plan. This would also help to identify any additional research needed to address, for example, data inconsistencies and strategic data gaps. A key issue to consider is what might be needed to support different elements of possible collaborative working – for example what might help make the case for increased investment in strategic infrastructure, and how might that requirement differ from understanding of data that might help when discussing the London Plan review.

## **6.3. Addressing barriers to housing delivery**

A key shared challenge is tackling barriers to delivery of locally approved planning permissions. Consideration should be given to what action might be taken jointly in the WSE to address this issue. Initial ideas include:

- Local discretionary ‘contract’-based approach to planning permissions (formerly known as ‘use it or lose it’).
- Local discretion to charge council tax on sites with unimplemented planning permissions.
- Improving construction sector skills provision through greater local control of skills budgets.
- Improve the ability to deliver and fund infrastructure in particular for large sites.

These/further ideas on addressing Barriers to Delivery are also emerging from the Outer London Commission (see *Annex 3*). These can be fed into any joint work.

## **6.4. Making the case for strategic infrastructure investment**

Joint lobbying for transport and infrastructure investment is a shared concern across the WSE. This could include improvement of key rail corridors as well as roads. Consideration should be given to what might be done jointly across the WSE to help make the case for key strategic schemes.

### **Recommendation 2:**

**Subject to recommendation 1 and given limited resources, prioritise and discuss next steps for the Steering Group to consider on shared issues for early joint action across the WSE.**

## D. Next steps

7. Subject to agreement of the arrangements for political collaboration (recommendation 1) and priorities for early joint action (recommendation 2), it is recommended that the political Steering Group be asked to take work forward with support from the Officer Group. This should include scoping resources required. To ensure WSE Summit members are kept up to date with key progress, it is also suggested that the Steering Group should use electronic communications between main Summit meetings as appropriate. Members' suggestions for ensuring effective communications with the wider Summit membership are welcome today.

### **Recommendation 3.**

**Mandate the political Steering Group to progress collaboration arrangements and develop proposals for joint action on priority shared issues, including scoping any resource requirements, with support from officers; and report progress to the full Summit via electronic communications and at future meetings as appropriate.**

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