

Subject:	Membership of South East England Councils (SEEC)	
Date of Meeting:	7 July 2009	Governance Committee
	9 July 2009	Cabinet
Report of:	Acting Director of Strategy & Governance	
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Wards Affected:	All	

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report recommends that Brighton & Hove City Council joins the new regional body "South East England Councils" following the discontinuation of the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) at the end of March 2009.
- 1.2 This is an opportunity for the city council to maintain a high level of involvement with the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) in the economic development of the South East region through the production of a new Single Regional Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the **Governance Committee** approve Councillor Mary Mears as the representative for Brighton & Hove City Council, subject to the Cabinet approving recommendation 2.3 below.
- 2.2 That **Cabinet** note the extract of the proceedings of the Governance Committee held on 7 July 2009.
- 2.3 That **Cabinet** approve that Brighton & Hove City Council become a member of South East England Councils (SEEC).

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council has been invited to join the South East England Councils (SEEC). This is the representative body of councils in the South East of England which, working with SEEDA, will replace the former South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) that was discontinued in March 2009.

- 3.2 Joining SEEC represents a significant opportunity for councils to influence economic development in the South East through the creation of a Single Regional Strategy, on which work will begin in the autumn of 2009. The draft 2009/10 business plan and objectives for SEEC is found in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 Subscription costs will be no more than 25% of the membership costs formerly paid by council to SEERA due to lighter support arrangements. Technical support and guidance will be provided to SEEC by the Local Authority Chief Executives (LACE) support group, which includes colleagues from county, unitary and district councils.
- 3.4 It is noted that a General Election may impact on these arrangements, but that this should not deter us from joining this regional forum, particularly given the current regional, national and international economic context.
- 3.5 It is therefore recommended to Cabinet that we confirm the request to join SEEC and attend the first AGM on 15 July where the draft business plan will be considered.
- 3.6 Governance Committee are asked to approve that the Leader, Councillor Mary Mears, represent Brighton & Hove City Council on SEEC, subject to approval of membership by Cabinet.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Management Team and Leadership have been consulted.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The cost to Brighton & Hove City Council to join SEEC is £5,082 for 2009/10. The scale of charges used by SEEC is proportionate to the size of the local authority. As stated in the report, costs are 25% of previous SEERA subscription (£20,328 for Brighton & Hove City Council in 08/09) which is within the budget provision held by the Culture & Enterprise directorate.

Finance Officer Consulted: Nigel Manvell

Date: 16/06/09

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Under the Council's Constitution the decision to join is made by Cabinet but the issue of in year external appointments is made by Council or the Governance Committee.

Lawyer Consulted: Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis

Date: 16/06/09

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 SEEC has been established to represent and promote the views and interests of local government in the region. Through SEEC, Brighton & Hove will have opportunity to raise equality and inequality issues at a sub-regional and regional level.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Involvement in SEEC will allow Brighton & Hove to influence sustainable economic and social development within the wider region.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The work programme for SEEC in 2009/10 includes the production of a report to inform councils of current and emerging crime and disorder issues in the South East in order to formulate an appropriate response. This may impact on the city's current approach.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 Joining SEEC presents an opportunity to share best practice and influence regional policy for economic and social development. This is particularly important given the affects of the current recession.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 Joining SEEC will provide an opportunity to represent the best interests of Brighton & Hove City Council and the city as a whole through regional discussion in order to influence national and European policies and resource allocation.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S)

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Not applicable.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. South East England Councils, Draft Business Plan 2009/10

Documents In Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None