

# **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

### **REPORT OF THE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES MANAGER**

**Report prepared by Janet Barnes**

**Date Issued: 13 August 2009**

#### **1. SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS**

##### **1.1 Issue for Decision**

- 1.1.1 To consider whether to accept the formal invitation to become a member of the South East England Councils.

##### **1.2 Recommendation of the Democratic Services Manager**

- 1.2.1 That the Council becomes a member of the South East England Councils.
- 1.2.2 That the subscription fee of £1,016 for the financial year 2009/10 be agreed.

##### **1.3 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 1.3.1 Following the Government's Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration, changes are being made to the way in which regional planning, transport, housing and economic development functions are carried out across the English regions.
- 1.3.2 There is now a joint responsibility between the South East England Development Agency ("SEEDA") and a new body of local authority leaders from across the region, South East England Councils ("SEEC"), to develop and sign off a Single Regional Strategy, replacing the previously separate regional spatial and regional economic strategies.
- 1.3.3 The South East England Regional Assembly ("SEERA") has now wound up and it is therefore critical that robust arrangements are in place to strengthen and enhance the vital democratic mandate all councils have in representing the interests and concerns of their residents and communities. It is planned to develop the SEEC to act as the collective democratic and lobbying arm of the region to key regional, national and international stakeholders.

- 1.3.4 A copy of the SEEC draft Business Plan for 2009/10 is attached at Appendix A and illustrates the aims of the SEEC to play a pivotal role in influencing the strategic regional issues and to work closely with Government and Opposition parties to ensure its voice is heard on all platforms.
- 1.3.5 SEEC aims to provide local government with a strong, new focus on all regional planning issues. SEEC will be supported through the expertise of a chief executives' group drawn from county, unitary and district councils. SEEC will operate through a series of full plenary and executive committee meetings.
- 1.3.6 The subscription levels for membership of SEEC will be no more than 25% of the membership costs previously paid to SEERA. The subscription fee for the financial year 2009/10 is £1,016 per Council. In comparison, the subscription fee to SEERA in 2008/09 was £4,066 per Council. The subscription fee will be funded from existing budgets.

#### 1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

- 1.4.1 The alternative would be to not become a member of SEEC. This is not recommended as the Council would not be represented on this new body of local authority leaders from across South East England and we would therefore not have the opportunity to put across the views of this Council.

#### 1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

- 1.5.1 Assists with the council's priorities to improve Economy and Prosperity and Sustainable Integrated Transport.

#### 1.6 Risk Management

- 1.6.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

#### 1.7 Other Implications

##### 1.7.1

1. Financial
2. Staffing
3. Legal
4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development

X

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### 1.8.1 None

N/A

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