

		AGENDA ITEM 9
		<b>PSEG/20/15</b>
<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	<b>22 October 2015</b>	
<b>FUTURE OF THE SOUTH EAST LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP</b>		
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Following the Committee's formal meeting on 23 July, Members met informally to receive a short update on the future of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). This report sets out the outcome of that update.

Councillor Graham Butland led the session given his knowledge of the matter as a representative on the SELEP Board and Leader of Braintree District Council.

Committee Members were already familiar with the issue as at full Council on 14 July the following motion was declared after a debate:

'This Council fully supports the Government's plans for devolution of powers to elected local authorities and calls on Ministers to help support Essex businesses and Councils deliver further prosperity to residents by expeditiously agreeing to the formation of a Greater Essex Local Enterprise Partnership (GELEP).

This will support more local and much quicker decision making, than the current South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), on schemes and projects which will help further to increase jobs, skills, wealth and growth in the Greater Essex economy.

The creation of a GELEP could also be co-terminus with plans for devolution in Essex and help return powers to local people.'

Councillor Butland confirmed that a letter had been sent to the Secretary of State on 20 July setting out a compelling case for the creation of a GELEP from Simon Brice, Chairman of the Greater Essex Business Board, and George Kieffer, Essex Vice Chair of the South East LEP. Furthermore he confirmed that all Essex Districts were in support of the proposal.

Given the ongoing interest in the issue, the Committee felt that it would be appropriate to reiterate its support for the Council's action in this matter, and therefore the Chairman undertook to write to the Secretary of State accordingly.

Consequently the following text was included in letters sent by Councillor Walsh to Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government; and Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills:

'On behalf of Essex County Council's Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee I am writing to confirm its firm support for proposals for the Government to review the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and the setting up of a Greater Essex Local Enterprise Partnership (GELEP).

As its title suggests the Committee is a part of the Council's scrutiny structure and its broad remit includes consideration of economic growth, planning, highways and environment. When it met on 23 July a part of its activity included a briefing and discussion on the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP). Although its membership was aware that the Council's Executive has already written to you following a motion passed at full Council in support of the formation of a GELEP, the Scrutiny Committee felt that given its role within the organisation it was important to emphasise the depth of County Councillor support. Over time the Committee has reviewed various economic growth and infrastructure related matters, which have provided councillors opportunities to consider the SELEP's role and that knowledge has informed their decision to support alternative LEP arrangements for Greater Essex.

The Committee supports the view that a GELEP would be more cognisant of the local economy and able to respond to the challenges that exist in practice, and in doing so would be more accountable in the delivery of sustainable economic growth. At the same time it is felt a smaller and more geographically cohesive LEP would overcome concerns that have arisen around the SELEP not least its remoteness and a lack of transparency on its activities.

While it is recognised that the LEPs are business driven, there clearly needs to be effective partnership working for them to be able to produce tangible outcomes. All the Essex Local Authorities have a democratic mandate to represent the local communities, which together with their respective roles and responsibilities, mean that they have a crucial role to play in supporting the growth agenda. A GELEP would have the advantage of being able to develop existing local partnerships as well as a better chance of forging stronger links, which may have been difficult in the broader geographical context of the SELEP. Furthermore the Committee believes that the proposal for a partnership focussed upon Greater Essex would have greater resonance with the local community, and so attract more support than the SELEP has been able to foster since its inception.

Councillors were mindful that the GELEP proposal has the support of the Essex Business Community, and there is a shared vision across Essex Local Authorities that there are opportunities for Greater Essex to be a powerhouse capable of delivering economic growth based upon its natural markets and growth corridors.'

Both Secretaries of State acknowledged the letters, and indicated that the Government is considering the proposals for Greater Essex and Kent and Medway LEPs.

In the meantime Councillor Bentley, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Infrastructure, Waste and Recycling, has advised the Chairman that Civil Servants have indicated through meetings with the Vice Chairmen of SELEP that HM Government will not consider alternative LEP arrangements for Essex, Southend, Thurrock, Kent, East Sussex.

While it is not proposed that the Committee take any further action on this particular matter at this time, Members will be engaged in any further discussion on the future of the SELEP as opportunities may arise.

**Action required by the Committee at this meeting:**

**To note the update set out in this report.**

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