

SE2050 ASELA Meeting: 03/09/20 Time: 10am/11:40am

Present: Cllr R. Gledhill (RG) – Chair

Cllr C. Hossack (CH) – Vice-Chair

Cllr S. Wootton (SW), Cllr N. Smith (NS), Cllr G. Callaghan (GC) and Cllr I. Gilbert (IG)

CEx: S. Scrutton (SS), J Stephenson, D. Marchant (DM), Lyn Carpenter (LC), S Logan (SL) and A Lewis (AL – substitute for A. Griffin)

Also present: R. Harris (RH) (Secretariat) and M Whiteley (MW) (Programme Lead)

Minutes

1. ASELA Leaders Feedback

The Leaders provided feedback from their Leaders only session covering the matters on the agenda below.

2. Minutes of the meetings held on 24 July and 18 August 2020

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 24 July and 18 August 2020 be agreed.

3. Local Government Reform

Leaders received and considered a report setting out the outline basis and timetable for submitting a proposal from the South Essex Authorities to Government that aligns to the forthcoming Devolution and Local Recovery white paper, following on from the submission of the ASELA Prospectus to Government on 31 July 2020.

Leaders made the following comments/observations:

- A short update report/paper should be provided to the constituent authorities Cabinet/Policy Committee in September on an individual basis;
- Reiterated that an objection to the ECC proposals for a Greater Essex CA to be submitted; The need to do this quickly ahead of the white paper;
- The need to develop and produce a policy document/paper setting out the high level policies and position statements for potential Joint Committee / CA – need to be clear and have clarity on the unitary and CA ambitions and what a unitary model in SE looks like (any model must be sustainable and need to draw out the evidence to support case for SE – 10 key metrics around population, etc);
- Emphasised the significant economic and social differences across the whole of Essex;
- The need to move at significant pace over the next several months;
- Thames Estuary work needs to be part of the brief – strengthens the case for ASELA;
- Noted that CEx across Essex had met to discuss ECC position and that Grant Thornton UK LLP would be commissioned to undertake a significant piece of work to provide the evidence base and validation of key criteria to create sustainable local authority structures in Essex (this work will be bespoke to Essex and not an 'off the shelf' strategy); This will be funded from a number of Essex local authorities and not by the ASELA;

- This will amount to significant level of technical work to ensure that the new unitaries are sustainable. Leaders are asked to endorse that this work should commence immediately without delay.

AGREED:

1. Noted the features a Unitary proposal would need to contain, as set out in the report/paper, and a work programme will be established to bring this work forward at pace and agreed that this work commences immediately without delay.
2. Noted the potential overall forward timetable as set out in the report/paper.
3. The brief / scope of the Grant Thornton UK LLP to be progressed at pace and provided to Leaders by 8 September 2020.
4. To develop and produce an ASELA comprehensive high level Policy framework paper and position statement.

4. Prospectus and Investment

Leaders received and considered a report providing an update on the engagement activity that has taken place over the last four weeks, following the submission of the ASELA Prospectus to Government on 31st July 2020.

Leaders discussed the potential for a public version of the Prospectus that could be shared and did not compromise the confidentiality. Leaders noted that the intention was to develop and turn the Prospectus into a strategy document which could be shared with the public, etc.

AGREED:

1. Noted the progress on the engagement activity and that regular reports regarding engagement with Government departments will be provided at future ASELA Leader meetings. The proposals regarding the private sector will be developed for the next Leaders meeting on 25th September.
2. That a public version of the Prospectus be developed and circulated to Leaders for their input and views and consideration on the timescale for when this could be made public.

5. Delivery Programme

Leaders discussed and considered a report outlining the immediate and next steps of the delivery plan building on previous discussions and Leaders commitments to accelerated delivery.

Leaders made the following comments/observations:

- Communications were key to promote and raise awareness of the work of ASELA and noted that a shortlist of organisations has been identified by CEx and that a recommendation would be made shortly;
- Need to look at producing supportive letters to Government and private businesses, particularly those significantly impacted by Covid-19 – what can ASELA do to support and 'petition' Government and stimulate economic recovery;

- Suggested that ASELA needs to be promoted, etc within relevant 'trade' papers, i.e. Financial Times, with articles, etc;

AGREED:

1. Noted the current status of the delivery plan, as set out in the report.
2. That the next steps set out in the report, be agreed.

6. AOB.

Branding – High Street / Town Centre Recovery

Leaders highlighted what they are doing within their local authority areas around high street recovery, i.e. 'We are back...we are open...', and agreed that an ASELA common/collective approach to branding should be developed. Leaders also made reference to a number of challenges facing the private sector, such as the end of Furlough.

Leaders noted that the economic development teams/officers across South Essex are working on high street recovery and there were a number of excellent initiatives taking place, i.e. 'No Use Empty Programme'. However, it was recognised that the work needs to be more coordinated and joined up across SE, under the ASELA branding.

DM will take back to the economic development teams/officers to look at the opportunities to provide a collective approach to high street recovery and demonstrate cross-boundary working. Leaders also asked that the economic development teams develop a collective / common approach / branding to High Street recovery. The key messages included 'support our local businesses...use us or lose us.'

7. Date and time of next meeting

Friday 18 September 2020 at 9am-10am (Informal meeting)

Friday 25 September 2020 at 9:15am

Friday 16 October 2020 at 9:15am

Thursday 5 November 2020 at 9:15am