SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS

MINUTES OF THE ALL-MEMBER MEETING & AGM
Thursday 21 June 2012
Church House Conference Centre, Dean's Yard, Westminster,
London SW1P 3NZ
Present: See attached attendance list.

1. Apologies, Declarations of Substitutes and Declarations of Interest

1.1 See attached attendance list. There were no declarations of interest.

2. SEEC political balance following May 2012 elections

2.1 Paul Watkins informed members that SEEC's political balance had not changed following analysis of the May 2012 election results.

3. Election of South East England Councils' Chairman for 2012-13

3.1 Gordon Keymer CBE (Tandridge DC, Conservative) was elected Chairman. He thanked Paul Carter for his excellent work as SEEC's first Chairman.

4. Election of Deputy Chairman, Secretary/Treasurer & Spokesmen

4.1 David Hodge (Surrey CC) was elected Deputy Chairman and Paul Watkins (Dover DC) was elected Secretary/Treasurer. The following appointments were also made:

- Moira Gibson (Surrey Heath BC) Planning & housing spokesman
- Peter Hardy (Buckinghamshire CC) Transport convenor
- Roland Dibbs (Rushmoor BC) Growth & skills spokesman.

5. Group appointments

5.1 Keith House (Lib-Dem) & Tony Page (Lab) were appointed Vice Chairmen.

5.2 Membership of the Executive Committee was agreed as follows:
Conservative group: Barry Norton, West Oxfordshire DC; Arif Hussain, Wycombe DC; Andrew Bowles, Swale BC; Ken Crookes, Hart DC; Myles Cullen, Chichester DC; Bob Standley, Wealden DC; Ian Hudspeth, Oxfordshire CC; Martin Tett, Bucks CC; David Hodge, Surrey CC; Ken Thornber CBE, Hampshire CC; Paul Carter, Kent CC; Mary Ballin, Bracknell Forest BC; Andrew Geary, Milton Keynes Council.
Labour group: Tony Page, Reading BC; John Burden, Gravesham BC.
Liberal Democrats: Keith House, Eastleigh BC; Gill Mattock, Eastbourne BC; David Neighbour, Hart DC; one nomination to follow from the Lib-Dem group.
In addition: SEEC office holders (Paul Watkins, Moira Gibson, Peter Hardy, Roland Dibbs) and SESL Chairman (David Burbage) will be ex-officio Executive members.

6. Nominations to external bodies

6.1 To be agreed at July's SEEC Executive meeting.

ACTION 1: SEEC's July Executive Committee to agree external nominations.

7. Minutes of 7 February meeting and Matters Arising

7.1 The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

7.2 Heather Bolton reported a reply from BT on outstanding questions from the February all-member meeting. On unbundling of exchanges, BT said this was a commercial issue for individual service providers. On concerns about slow roll out of superfast broadband in Milton Keynes, BT responded saying that it was making good progress but would need public sector investment to achieve full coverage.

8. Annual Review & fair funding update: Cllr Paul Carter, SEEC Chairman 2011-12

8.1 Paul Carter reflected on the good work undertaken in his three years as Chairman, commending SEEC as a lean, fit for purpose and financially-robust organisation.

8.2 His presentation focused on SEEC's 'Fixing a Broken System' report. Based on work undertaken over the past year, the report illustrates key concerns about local government and heath funding systems and how they could be improved to give a fairer deal to the South East. Key points included:

- The South East gets an unfair deal in the national distribution of local government and health service funding. South East formula grant is less than half the average for London, capital spending is England's lowest and the South East gets 11% less per person for health services than the national average.
- The South East contributes more to the national exchequer than any other part of the country, including London, but its continued success cannot be taken for granted if critical investment is not forthcoming.
- The South East is not universally wealthy and includes areas of major deprivation, and this is getting worse relative to other parts of England.
- While some new funding approaches such as CIL and New Homes Bonus are welcome, there is still a large funding gap to be addressed.

8.3 Paul argued there is a compelling case for change. He proposed that historically under-funded councils should retain more than 50% of business rates locally to provide a strong driver for local and national economic success. He asked Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP to take up the case and establish an independent commission to redress the current funding imbalance.

9. Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State, Communities & Local Government

9.1 The Chairman welcomed Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, attending in place of Rt Hon Greg Clark MP who had to attend to urgent Parliamentary business.

9.2 The Minister acknowledged the scale & diversity of the South East and its importance to the national economy. He also praised the value of central-local partnerships in addressing challenges, such as securing a future for the Pfizer site in Dover.

9.3 He understood SEEC's concerns about national funding distribution but said there remained a need to redistribute money from the South East to other parts of the country. He was currently looking at how to deal with deprivation and poverty, including potentially building on work with Lord Bruce-Lockhart in the 1990s on the relationship between sparsity and deprivation in Kent.

9.4 The Government was still on course to deliver changes to local government finance by April 2013. Business rate reforms were unlikely to be significantly modified but there was scope for further change in future. He encouraged members to ensure decision-makers were aware of SEEC's views on local business rate shares.

9.5 The Minister explained his two current key priorities were better procurement and supporting localism. Localism should be based on local people and local councils taking power, not seeking permission from central Government, he said.

9.6 Questions and discussion with the Minister covered:

- The future of the transition grant.
- Planning and the appeals process.
- The community right to challenge.
- A city deal between Milton Keynes and the South East Midlands.
- Role of LEPs and their relationship with local government.

10. Report of SEEC EU task & finish group, Cllr Gordon Keymer CBE

10.1 Gordon Keymer updated members on SEEC's work influencing European funding and policy during the past year, focusing on three main priorities:

- Structural Funds – making the case for continued funding within the South East under new programmes from 2014.
- Reducing burdens – suggesting improvements to the draft Energy Efficiency Directive reducing the impact on local government.
- Governance of ERDF competitiveness funding – local authority members played an important role in steering and monitoring the programme.

10.2 The priority in 2012-13 will be to influence development of new 2014-20 European funding programme. It will also be important to remain alert to EU policy that may burden local authorities and continue effective input on governance of current funds.

10.3 Members agreed recommendations, including continuation of the task & finish group for a further 12 months. [**Note** - following subsequent discussion the July Executive Committee agreed this work should be mainstreamed and the group disbanded].

11. Data Dashboard and report of SEEC's data task & finish group, Cllr Martin Tett

11.1 Martin Tett reported that two editions of the Dashboard produced during this year had been well received. Dashboard themes cover employment, economy, housing, infrastructure, public finance, demography, migration and environment. The Executive Committee will need to look at conclusions from the data and identify where SEEC may be able to take action to help address them.

11.2 Martin also reported on a successful South East Skills & Employment Summit in March. This bought together members, business representatives & other organisations to discuss key issues with speakers including Employment Minister Chris Grayling.

11.3 Members endorsed the Dashboard and agreed to hold a member workshop on the service & infrastructure implications of the ageing population. The task & finish group has been disbanded.

ACTION 2: SEEC to organise a member workshop on service and infrastructure implications of the ageing population.

12. SEEC financial report: Accounts 2011-12 and subscriptions 2012-13

12.1 Paul Watkins asked members to note the accounts for the year. He thanked Surrey CC for hosting SEEC and handling payroll. Members froze subscriptions for 2012-13.

13. SEEC business plan 2012-13

13.1 Heather Bolton introduced a draft business plan, explaining that today's member decision on closer working by SEEC & SESL would need to be reflected in a final plan.

13.2 Members supported the inclusion of issues including:

- Continuing to make the case for fairer local government funding.
- Two data dashboard updates per year and take forward actions on key issues.
- Pressing for continued South East access to EU funds & monitoring relevant policy.
- Making the case for infrastructure investment to help growth.
- Workshop on service & infrastructure implications of the demographic time bomb.
- Skills & employability – taking forward issues from the March 2012 workshop.
- Acting as a collective South East voice on developing government policies.

Members suggested additions to the work programme including:

- Sharing good practice, for example on carbon reduction work.
- Engagement with evolving Health & Wellbeing Boards.

13.3 A revised plan will be prepared for SEEC's Executive Committee in July.

ACTION 3: SEEC's Executive to discuss revised business plan priorities in July.

14. Confirmed forward meeting dates:

- 11 July 2012 – SEEC Executive. Venue: LGA, London
- 11 September 2012 – SEEC Executive. Venue: TBC
- 8 November 2012 – SEEC All-member meeting (shared date with SESL). Venue: Church House Conference Centre, London.

15. Any other business

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 2.55pm.

Signed: _____

Gordon Keymer CBE, Chairman

Date: **8 November 2012**

Name	Organisation	Signature / Apologies / Substitute
Neil Parkin	Adur District Council	Apologies
Gillian Brown	Arun District Council	Yes
Peter Wood	Ashford Borough Council	Apologies
John Cartwright	Aylesbury Vale District Council	Yes – Sub Carole Paternoster
Clive Sanders	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council	Apologies
Paul Bettison	Bracknell Forest Borough Council	Yes
Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire County Council	Yes
John Gilbey	Canterbury City Council	Apologies
Barry Wood	Cherwell District Council	Apologies
Myles Cullen	Chichester District Council	Yes
Nick Rose	Chiltern District Council	Yes
Bob Lanzer	Crawley Borough Council	Yes
Jeremy Kite	Dartford Borough Council	Apologies
Paul Watkins	Dover District Council	Yes
Ken Moon	East Hampshire District Council	Apologies
Gill Mattock	Eastbourne Borough Council	Yes
Keith House	Eastleigh Borough Council	Apologies
John O'Reilly	Elmbridge Borough Council	Apologies
Neil Dallen	Epsom & Ewell Borough Council	Yes
John Burden	Gravesham Borough Council	Yes
Tony Rooth	Guildford Borough Council	Apologies
Ken Thornber, CBE	Hampshire County Council	Apologies
Ken Crookes	Hart District Council	Yes
Jeremy Birch	Hastings Borough Council	Yes
Tony Briggs	Havant Borough Council	Apologies
Ray Dawe	Horsham District Council	Apologies
Paul Carter	Kent County Council	Yes
Elayne Merry	Lewes District Council	Apologies
Chris Garland	Maidstone Borough Council	Apologies
Garry Wall	Mid Sussex District Council	Yes
Andrew Geary	Milton Keynes Council	Yes
Barry Rickman	New Forest District Council	Apologies
Ed Turner	Oxford City Council	Apologies
Ian Hudspeth	Oxfordshire County Council	Yes
Gerald Vernon-Jackson	Portsmouth City Council	Apologies
Tony Page	Reading Borough Council	Apologies
Graham Knight	Reigate & Banstead Borough Council	Yes
Carl Maynard	Rother District Council	Apologies
David Burbage	RB of Windsor & Maidenhead	Yes

Patrick Roberts	Runnymede Borough Council	Apologies
Roland Dibbs	Rushmoor Borough Council	Yes
Peter Fleming	Sevenoaks District Council	Yes
Robert Bliss	Shepway District Council	Apologies
James Swindlehurst	Slough Borough Council	Apologies
Adrian Busby	South Bucks District Council	Yes – Sub Roger Reed
Ann Ducker	South Oxfordshire District Council	Yes
Richard Williams	Southampton City Council	Apologies
Vivienne Leighton	Spelthorne Borough Council	Apologies
David Hodge	Surrey County Council	Yes
Moira Gibson	Surrey Heath Borough Council	Yes
Andrew Bowles	Swale Borough Council	Yes
Gordon Keymer, CBE	Tandridge District Council	Yes
Ian Carr	Test Valley Borough Council	Apologies
Clive Hart	Thanet District Council	Apologies
Nicolas Heslop	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council	Yes – Sub Matthew Balfour
David Jukes	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	Apologies
Robert Knowles	Waverley Borough Council	Apologies
Bob Standley	Wealden District Council	Yes
Graham Jones	West Berkshire Council	Apologies
Barry Norton	West Oxfordshire District Council	Yes
Keith Wood	Winchester City Council	Apologies
John Kingsbury	Woking Borough Council	Apologies
David Lee	Wokingham Borough Council	Yes
Paul Yallop	Worthing Borough Council	Apologies
Arif Hussain	Wycombe District Council	Yes
Speakers		
Eric Pickles MP	Sec of State for Communities & Local Gov	
Observers		
Marianne Abley	LGA	
Ian Hepburn	Wildlife Trusts SE	
Other Attendees		
Chris Williams	SEEC	
Heather Bolton	SEEC	
Nick Woolfenden	SEEC	
Hayley Austin	SEEC	
Kate Jones	SESL	
Aidan Shutter	Buckinghamshire CC	
Susie Kemp	Surrey CC	
David Godfrey	Kent CC	