

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS

MINUTES OF THE ALL-MEMBER PLENARY MEETING & AGM

Wednesday 13 July 2011

Church House Conference Centre, Dean's Yard,
Westminster, London SW1P 3NZ



Present: See attached attendance list.

4. Election of South East England Councils' Chairman for 2011-12

4.1 Members agreed to change the order of the agenda, starting with elections. These minutes reflect the order in which items were discussed.

4.2 Chris Williams called for nominations for Chairman of SEEC. Paul Carter (Kent CC) was nominated, members agreed and he was elected.

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

5.1 Gordon Keymer (Tandridge DC) was nominated as Deputy Chairman, members agreed and he was elected. Paul Watkins (Dover DC) was nominated as Secretary/Treasurer, members agreed and he was elected. The following nominations were also made and agreed by members:

- Moira Gibson (Surrey Heath BC) Planning & housing spokesman
- David Robertson (Oxfordshire CC) Transport convenor
- Martin Tett (Buckinghamshire CC) Economic development & skills spokesman.

6. Group appointments for Vice Chairmen & Executive Committee

6.1 Nominations for Vice Chairmen were put forward and agreed. Keith House (Liberal Democrats) and Tony Page (Labour) were elected.

6.2 Nominations for the Executive Committee were put forward and agreed as follows:

Conservative group

Mary Ballin	-	Bracknell Forest BC
Andrew Bowles	-	Swale BC
Paul Carter	-	Kent CC
Ken Crookes	-	Hart DC
Myles Cullen	-	Chichester DC
Andrew Geary	-	Milton Keynes Council
Lynne Hack	-	Reigate & Banstead BC
Lorraine Lindsay-Gale	-	Oxfordshire CC
Barry Norton	-	West Oxfordshire DC
Andrew Povey	-	Surrey CC
Bob Standley	-	Wealden DC
Martin Tett	-	Bucks CC
Ken Thornber	-	Hampshire CC

Labour group

Tony Page	-	Reading BC
James Swindlehurst	-	Slough BC

Liberal Democrats

Keith House	-	Eastleigh BC
David Tutt	-	Eastbourne BC
Gerald Vernon-Jackson	-	Portsmouth City Council

One more Lib-Dem nomination to follow.

In addition, the following SEEC office holders will serve as ex-officio members of the Executive: Gordon Keymer, Paul Watkins, Moira Gibson and David Robertson.

Task & finish group membership will continue apart from those no longer eligible. Paul Watkins agreed to seek nominations for vacancies after the meeting.

7. Nominations to external bodies

- 7.1 Paul Carter was appointed SEEC's representative on the LGA Executive, with Gordon Keymer or Paul Watkins as his substitutes. David Robertson from Oxfordshire CC was nominated to the LGA Transport Futures Group.
- 7.2 Nominations were not finalised for the South Central Ambulance Foundation Trust. Paul Watkins agreed to follow this up after the meeting. Nominations were not finalised for the ERDF Local Management Committee. Paul Watkins agreed to fill the role pro-tem until an appointment is made.

ACTION 1: Finalise SEEC internal and external nominations.

1. Apologies, Declarations of Substitutes and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 These were recorded on the attendance list (attached). No declarations of interest were made.

2. Minutes of SEEC Plenary on 17 March 2011 and Matters Arising Not Elsewhere on the Agenda

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous Plenary were agreed as a true and accurate record.
- 2.2 Paul Watkins referred back to the March presentation on IESE's self funding proposals and asked members of the IESE board for an update. It was reported that IESE would evolve into a company limited by guarantee, carrying over some £17million funding and there would be an election for a new Board with a majority of local authority members. IESE would continue to assist local authorities in improving efficiency, with some work charged and some pro-bono.

3. Review of the past year: Cllr Paul Carter, SEEC Chairman

- 3.1 Paul Carter looked back over the past year and commented that SEEC had built momentum substantially in its first full year. SEEC is a lean, fit for purpose organisation and due to the successful wind down of SEERA Ltd and transfer of funds, SEEC is financially robust with approaching £900,000 in the bank.
- 3.2 Paul thanked the staff at SEEC, led by Heather Bolton, for their achievements over the year and thanked the SEEC members who gave up their time to serve on the Executive and Task & Finish groups. He also thanked Surrey CC for hosting the SEEC office in Kingston and Chris Williams for the time he gives to SEEC.
- 3.3 Looking forward, Paul noted that SEEC needs to know its limitations and focus activities for the coming year. Significant issues for the South East will be the Fair Funding work, the National Planning Framework and Localism Bill. SEEC must continue to lobby for the appropriate allocation of resources to pay for infrastructure to support growth.
- 3.4 This year had seen SEEC develop a data dashboard allowing each authority to compare where they are on some very important indices.
- 3.5 The LGA had invited regional representatives onto their Executive board, giving Paul a seat on the LGA Executive along with colleagues from other regions. He added that most of local government across the regions had grouped into organisations supported by subscriptions, similar to SEEC. Most importantly, regional representation allowed SEEC to be the voice of the South East and,

hopefully under new leadership, the LGA would be a receptive audience that would lobby on our behalf.

- 3.6 With the aim of rationalising organisations, Paul had started discussions with Andrew Povey, who is Chairman of SESL, about trying to bring some work under one umbrella to make better use of resources. Paul and Andrew had agreed to a joint piece of work to take to the SESL board and SEEC Executive on how a combined organisation could look.
- 9. SEEC European priorities: Report and recommendations from member task group. Speaker: Gordon Keymer, Chairman, Europe Task & Finish Group**
- 9.1 Gordon Keymer explained that the group was established in November 2010 and tasked with making recommendations on European priorities to the SEEC AGM.
- 9.2 The group's work had already helped identify policy issues of concern that SEEC had taken action on. These included:
- Stimulating member discussion on European funding issues at the March All-Member meeting and a follow up letter to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation & Skills.
 - Alerting members to funding opportunities in the latest rounds of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Interreg programme.
 - Meeting members of the House of Lords and MEPs to discuss the future of cohesion policy.
- 9.3 The group had identified two areas for SEEC to take forward. Firstly, ensuring SEEC members make the most of European funding opportunities in current EU programmes for 2007 to 2013. Secondly, influencing future European funding from 2014 onwards, especially ensuring funds are available to the South East. Key to achieving these would be developing effective relationships with the Committee of the Regions, UK government, local government representatives on programme committees (eg ERDF) and local government groups with representatives in Brussels such as SELP. It was suggested that an MEP should be invited to speak at a future SEEC All-member meeting.
- 9.4 Members agreed the task & finish group's three key recommendations:
- Put arrangements in place to keep members informed of opportunities to access European funding.
 - Press the case to government and the EU on the importance of maintaining access to European funding in South East England.
 - Continue the task group for a year to provide leadership and steer on European issues.
- 9.5 Member discussion followed. Andrew Povey offered to share Surrey CC's work on European procurement regulations. Paul Watkins suggested SEEC should make representations to support member bids for assisted area status next year. Paul Carter suggested tracking all EU spending in the South East.

ACTION 2: Explore opportunities to invite an MEP to a future SEEC All-member meeting to discuss European issues.

ACTION 3: Establish arrangements for updating SEEC members on EU funding opportunities.

ACTION 4: Explore SEEC representations on procurement and assisted area status and investigate work on tracking EU spending in the South East.

- 8. SEEC Fair funding report – presentation and discussion on options for change. Speaker: Jude Ranasinghe, Local Government Futures**
- 8.1 Jude explained Stage 1 of Fair Funding had been considered by the SEEC Executive on 7 June. This outlined funding levels and cost pressures, showing the South East received considerably less funding per capita than other regions, in formula grant, health and capital funding.
- 8.2 Stage 2 will look at incentivisation schemes, including re-localisation of business rates, and whether the wider funding system for local government could be made simpler and more transparent. He asked for members' views on what they would like to see as the next steps.
- 8.3 The Local Government Resource Review is mainly looking at potential for re-localising business rates so authorities retain a proportion of the growth in business rates for their area. In the South East around £3.2 billion is collected in business rates but only £2.4bn received back, meaning the national pot gains £830m a year from the South East. Key questions included:
- How much will local authorities be able to retain and what might be put back into a national or regional pool?
 - How will risk be managed? At the moment the risk of business rates falling is borne by central Government.
 - How do you define growth?
- 8.4 SEEC could also consider how to maximise the benefit of other incentivisation schemes, such as New Homes Bonus or tax increment financing.
- 8.5 Another important factor was whether changes to the wider funding system could make the grant system fairer – for example by altering the proportion of funding allocated per head and for density, sparsity and deprivation. However, once damping was taken into account outcomes were unpredictable. Also the system's complexity could generate unintended consequences. Overall, a simple formula would benefit the South East as a whole but there would be winners and losers.
- 8.6 In discussion members highlighted points, including:
- Welcoming greater devolution of business rates to local government.
 - The need for a simpler, more transparent grants system.
 - Whether groups of authorities want to create a pool to protect individual authorities from the loss of funding, for example by LEP area.
 - Concerns about a regional approach when government allocates funding to local authorities individually not regionally. Any change will create winners and losers.
 - Business rates have no connection with economic or social need of an area.
 - The level of control that any individual authority can have over increases or decreases in business rates.
 - The threat to South East funding if London cuts a deal on its own.
 - Is business rate income likely to increase?
- 8.7 Paul Carter suggested that the Stage 2 report should also touch on capital allocations and the funding of other public agencies such as health. He asked for member views and suggested an Executive sub group to agree priority topics.

ACTION 5: To form a sub group of the Executive Committee to agree next steps for Local Government Futures' Stage 2 report.

11. SEEC Data Dashboard: Report and recommendations from member task & finish group. Speaker: Mike Appleyard, Chairman, Data Task & Finish Group

11.1 Mike explained that the task & finish group had met four times and agreed to present data under six headings: economy & employment; housing & infrastructure; public finance & grants; demography; migration; and environment.

Members agreed the task group's four recommendations:

- To produce the dashboard three times a year, published on the SEEC website.
- Use the data to identify areas where SEEC should be making the case to Government about South East needs.
- Transfer SEEDA's economic intelligence archive to the SEEC website.
- To continue the task & finish group for a year, with most work via email.

11.2 Member discussion included praise for an excellent report and queries about further developing the dashboard to show:

- The large numbers of the South East population affected by deprivation.
- The number of working age people who are inactive, such as young people who are not in education, employment or training.

Paul Carter suggested circulating the information to MPs.

ACTION 6: Publish Data Dashboard on SEEC website & send highlights to MPs.

ACTION 7: Add SEEC website link to SEEDA's economic archive while changes to SEEC's website are made to allow full online hosting of extensive archive.

ACTION 8: Explore options for developing the next edition of the dashboard to include information on numbers affected by deprivation and economic inactivity.

10. EU funding for families with multiple problems: Speaker: Baroness Debbie Stedman-Scott, Tomorrow's People

10.1 Tomorrow's People is an employment charity. Since 1984 they have helped over 440,000 people into work, with 71% still in employment after 12 months. Many people helped come from families with multiple problems, which cost the country £8 bn a year. Helping one member of each family into work would deliver big savings.

10.2 Debbie explained the Department of Work and Pensions had recognised the value of helping families with multiple problems into work and allocated £200m from the European Social Fund for projects in this area. Local authorities need to make contact with organisations bidding to run projects to ensure they meet local needs. She outlined how such projects could be successfully delivered, drawing on a pilot in Kent. Members were invited to a more detailed round table discussion later.

12. BIS Local: An introduction to role & remit. Speaker: Ian Coates, BIS South Central & West

12.1 Ian explained that BIS ministers had set up BIS Local to help them engage with local partners and gather local feedback and intelligence.

12.2 Six BIS Local teams had been set up across England. Ian leads the South Central & West team; the London & East team and the East Midlands team also cover parts of SEEC's area. With 8-10 people in each team they are much smaller than previous structures and have no programme budgets. Aims are:

- Enabling an effective response to economic shocks.
- Helping local partners identify and realise economic opportunity.
- Using local knowledge to influence policy.

12.3 Members welcomed the removal of former regional bureaucracy, but highlighted concerns about whether BIS Local would have capacity to undertake all that was

expected of it. They highlighted potential confusion arising from the wide range of new arrangements created by different departments. Members asked BIS Local to help emphasise South East needs to ministers, particularly in ensuring access to future Regional Growth Fund allocations and other economic measures.

13. SEEC financial report: Accounts 2010-11 and subscriptions 2011-12

13.1 Paul Watkins updated members on SEEC's financial position:

- Including funds from the liquidation of SEERA Ltd, SEEC started the current financial year with £889,000.
- From 1 April 2011, SEEC had been responsible for its own finances. These were previously handled by Buckinghamshire CC.
- SEEC would welcome advice from member local authorities on managing reserves and achieving a return on investments.

13.2 Members agreed to freeze SEEC subscriptions at 2010-11 rates for two years.

14. SEEC business plan 2011-12

14.1 Heather Bolton introduced an outline SEEC business plan and asked for input from members on priorities for 2011-12. The outline SEEC budget for 2011-12 including running costs and project spend is £360,000. This could change depending on members' decisions on priorities. Proposed work areas included:

- Local authority finance – continuing to argue for a fair funding deal.
- Data dashboard – developing the dashboard and publishing 3 updates a year.
- Europe – arguing for continued South East access to EU funds and monitoring opportunities to bid for funds.
- Transport – using the newly appointed Transport Convenor to identify and influence strategic transport issues.
- Migration – continuing to update members on migration trends and issues via the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration.

14.2 Possible additional areas included:

- Infrastructure summit – joint working on a South East event
- Economy – exploring possible joint working with LEPs
- Economic growth – research into under-performing areas of the South East.
- NHS changes – how local authorities can ensure health services match needs.
- New Homes Bonus – the impact one year on.
- Localism Bill – monitor progress of legislation.

ACTION 9: Present detailed business plan to SEEC Executive in September.

15. Items for Information. Confirmed forward meeting dates for 2011:

- Executive Committee 30 September. Institute of Materials, Minerals & Mining
- SEEC All-member meeting 8 November. Royal Horticultural Halls
- Executive Committee 9 December. Institute of Materials, Minerals & Mining.

16. Any other business

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 1pm.

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	Apologies
Andrew Finney	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council	Yes- Sub Clive Sanders
Mary Ballin	Bracknell Forest Borough Council	Apologies
Bill Randall	Brighton & Hove City Council	Apologies
Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire County Council	Yes
Mike Appleyard	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	Apologies
Bob Lanzer	Crawley Borough Council	Yes – Sub Claire Denman
Jeremy Kite	Dartford Borough Council	Apologies
Paul Watkins	Dover District Council	Yes
Patrick Burridge	East Hampshire District Council	Apologies
Peter Jones	East Sussex County Council	Apologies
David Tutt	Eastbourne Borough Council	Apologies
Keith House	Eastleigh Borough Council	Yes
John O'Reilly	Elmbridge Borough Council	Apologies
Keith Mann	Epsom & Ewell Borough Council	Apologies
Sean Woodward	Fareham Borough Council	Apologies
John Burden	Gravesham Borough Council	Apologies
Tony Rooth	Guildford Borough Council	Apologies
Ken Thornber, CBE	Hampshire County Council	Yes – Sub Colin Davidovitz
Ken Crookes	Hart District Council	Yes
Jeremy Birch	Hastings Borough Council	Yes
Tony Briggs	Havant Borough Council	Apologies
Robert Nye	Horsham District Council	Apologies
David Pugh	Isle of Wight 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	Apologies
Andrew Geary	Milton Keynes Council	Yes
Barry Rickman	New Forest District Council	Apologies
Ed Turner	Oxford City Council	Yes – Sub Van Coulter

Lorraine Lindsay-Gale	Oxfordshire County Council	Yes
David Robertson	Oxfordshire County Council	Yes
Gerald Vernon-Jackson	Portsmouth City Council	Yes
Tony Page	Reading Borough Council	Yes
Lynne Hack	Reigate & Banstead Borough Council	Yes
Carl Maynard	Rother District Council	Apologies
David Burbage	RB of Windsor & Maidenhead	Apologies
Patrick Roberts	Runnymede Borough Council	Apologies
Roland Dibbs	Rushmoor Borough Council	Apologies
Peter Fleming	Sevenoaks District Council	Yes
Robert Bliss	Shepway District Council	Yes
James Swindlehurst	Slough Borough Council	Yes
Adrian Busby	South Bucks District Council	Apologies
Ann Ducker	South Oxfordshire District Council	Yes
Royston Smith	Southampton City Council	Apologies
Vivienne Leighton	Spelthorne Borough Council	Apologies
Andrew Povey	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
Robert Bayford	Thanet District Council	Apologies
Mark Worrall, OBE	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council	Yes
Mark Rhodes	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council	Yes
Robert Atwood	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	Apologies
Matthew Barber	Vale of White Horse District Council	Apologies
Robert Knowles	Waverley Borough Council	Yes
Bob Standley	Wealden District Council	Apologies
Graham Jones	West Berkshire Council	Yes
Pamela Bale	West Berkshire Council	Yes
Barry Norton	West Oxfordshire District Council	Yes
Louise Goldsmith	West Sussex County Council	Apologies
George Beckett	Winchester City Council	Yes
John Kingsbury	Woking Borough Council	Apologies
David Lee	Wokingham Borough Council	Apologies
Paul Yallop	Worthing Borough Council	Apologies
Alex Collingwood	Wycombe District Council	Apologies
Speakers		
Jude Ranasinghe	Local Government Futures	
Baroness Stedman-Scott	Tomorrow's People	

Ian Coates	BIS Local South Central & West	
Observers		
Becky Whale	SESL	
Kristen Guida	Climate South East	
David Godfrey	Kent CC	
Sam Sheerer	Tomorrow's People	
Vincent O'Connell	Surrey CC	
Christine Drury	CPRE South East	
Other Attendees		
Chris Williams	SEEC	
Heather Bolton	SEEC	
Nick Woolfenden	SEEC	
Hayley Austin	SEEC	
Roy Millard	SESPM	
Ben Millard	SEEC	