

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & ALL-MEMBER MEETING**



Date: 30 June 2016

Subject: **Political Balance on SEEC Executive following May 2016 Local Elections**

Report of: Heather Bolton, SEEC Director

**Recommendations:**

- i) Note the results of the May 2016 local elections and the implications for allocation of seats on the SEEC Executive.
- ii) Endorse an approach to ‘smaller parties’ asking them to consider putting forward a formal cross-party alliance to claim two available Executive seats.

**1. Determining political balance on the SEEC Executive**

- 1.1 SEEC’s constitution sets out a formula for allocating seats on the SEEC Executive to political parties in proportion to the percentage of the vote each party receives across the 74 South East local authorities. Seat allocations therefore reflect the share of votes cast for each political party, rather than the number of councils controlled by each party.
- 1.2 The constitution also sets a minimum threshold, whereby Executive seats are only allocated to parties who return more than 5% of total councillors across the South East. There are currently three SEEC member councils led by smaller parties (UKIP, Independent & Residents). These leaders will be invited to SEEC All-Member meetings and events but are not automatically eligible for an Executive seat as their parties hold less than 5% of councillor seats South-East-wide.
- 1.3 The template for Executive seats below reflects the results of local elections on 5 May 2016. Party allocations are rounded to the nearest whole number.
- 1.4 2016 saw the percentage of votes for smaller political parties at 12.67%, a rise from 12.4% last year. A single party receiving 12.67% of the vote would secure two seats on the SEEC Executive. However the votes are split between four parties and none of these parties individually has the 174 councillors needed to pass the 5% threshold and qualify for Executive seats in their own right.

**SEEC Executive template based on 2016 election results:**

|                      | Con          | Lab          | Lib Dem      | UKIP   | Ind         | Residents   | Green       | Total       |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| N <sup>o</sup> Cllrs | 2,313        | 419          | 366          | 142  | 126         | 83          | 28          | 3477        |
| <b>% Cllrs</b>       | <b>66.52</b> | <b>12.05</b> | <b>10.53</b> | <b>4.08</b>  | <b>3.62</b> | <b>2.39</b> | <b>0.81</b> | <b>100%</b> |
| % of vote            | 62.32        | 13.86        | 11.14        | 5.76   | 3.94        | 1.80        | 1.17        | 100%        |
|                      | <b>12</b>    | <b>3</b>     | <b>2</b>     | Combined share of vote = 2<br>but no party alone meets threshold of 5%<br>of councillors |             |             |             | <b>19</b>   |

- 1.5 If a formal alliance comes forward between two or more of the smaller parties, it is possible to allocate two Executive seats to a cross-party alliance which represents more than 5% of the total councillors in the South East. Allied parties could then jointly nominate two councillors to represent their collective interests on SEEC Executive. Nominated councillors would have to be drawn from a SEEC member authority.
- 1.6 It is proposed that the SEEC secretariat write to four leading councillors in member authorities who represent the Independent, UKIP, Residents and Green parties setting out the position. In advance of SEEC’s next Executive Committee on 30 September they will be asked to indicate whether they are interested in exploring a cross-party alliance to claim the two available SEEC Executive seats.

- 1.7 In a similar situation last year, a formal alliance came forward between the Independent and Resident groups to take two Executive seats. If no formal alliance emerges, at the September Executive members should consider whether they wish to keep two seats vacant or reallocate them between the Conservative, Lib-Dem and Labour parties. Reallocation in line with the percentage share of the vote for each party would give (rounded to nearest whole number): Conservative 14 seats, Labour 3 seats, Lib Dem, 2 seats.
- 1.8. The new template for seat allocations comes into immediate effect for today's SEEC Executive Committee elections.