



**1. Welcome, apologies, declarations of substitutes and declarations of interest**

1.1 Nicolas Heslop welcomed members. Apologies and substitutes are on the attached attendance list. There were no declarations of interest.

**2. Overcoming barriers to housing delivery**

2.1 Nicolas Heslop introduced LGA Chairman Lord Porter of Spalding CBE and Carrick Casson-Crook, Barratt/David Wilson Homes' Strategic Land Director.

2.2 Lord Porter explained the LGA has raised concerns with Government about parts of the Housing and Planning Bill. These include the possible loss of affordable housing from the enforced sale of councils' high value housing stock, and concerns about how starter homes will work in practice. He reiterated LGA research shows planning is not the problem in housing delivery, with 476,000 unimplemented planning applications nationally (66,800 in the South East). He also felt further Treasury action was needed to free up finance for housing delivery.

2.3 Carrick Casson-Crook highlighted the importance of close working between the private and public sector to improve delivery, as well as having a good mix of small and larger developers. A variety of sites and delivery models could achieve this, supported by effective investment in infrastructure and industry skills. He also highlighted the importance of good design, and concerns about speculative scheme 'promoters' who could slow down delivery of development – by only gaining outline permission some promoters left much work for developers to do before they could start building.

2.4 In discussion members highlighted:

- The need to tackle slow development once permission is granted, including progress from outline consents to implementable permission. Discretionary powers should be considered for councils to charge Council Tax on sites if delivery deadlines are not met, as well as improving industry skills or other actions.
- The importance of improving the availability of finance for buyers and small builders.
- How to ensure timely delivery of infrastructure for both large and smaller developments.
- The challenge of ensuring sufficient affordable housing, including financial viability of developer contributions eg Rushmoor has raised concerns about 'gold plating' of EU law leading to higher development costs and less money available for developer infrastructure contributions.
- Councils' key local leadership role, including establishing formal partnerships such as LLPs to support delivery.

**ACTION 1: SEEC to circulate Carrick Casson-Crook's contact details and slides.**

**ACTION 2: SEEC officers to reflect members' key points in forthcoming work on overcoming barriers to housing delivery.**

**ACTION 3: Rushmoor BC to provide LGA Chairman with details of how environmental 'gold plating' is reducing developer contributions for other needs.**

**3. Business rates: Future options in the South East**

3.1 Lord Porter identified 100% business rates retention as the next big issue facing local government. He is encouraging the LGA to question Government on potential overestimation of the extra funding this will give councils. He wants a local government-led plan for redistributing funding between areas rather than letting the Treasury decide. Councils will need to use the extra business rate income to fund additional services. Lord Porter thinks this should include skills as they are more relevant to businesses than current proposals for business rates to fund attendance allowances.

3.2 LGA Senior Finance Adviser Mike Heiser explained that the Government's plan for 100% local retention of business rates by 2020 has to be cost neutral for Government. Consultation is expected this summer and legislation next year but LGA early thinking has started to emerge, for example:

- Grants will be replaced by increased local business rate retention but the extra income will have to fund new responsibilities. Consultations are likely to cover responsibility for Public Health, Housing Benefit administration and Attendance Allowance.
- Top-ups and tariffs are likely to be reset, so the LGA is pressuring for a fundamental review of the needs analysis to underpin these.
- All councils will be able to reduce business rates but only metro mayors can increase them.
- Applications for rate relief for NHS Trusts could cut business rate income by up to £1.1bn – the LGA wants discretion on reliefs to ensure that they reflect local priorities.

3.3 In discussion members debated full freedom for councils to set business rates and the need to balance healthy competition between areas with avoiding a ‘race to the bottom’ that left councils underfunded or business rates subsidised by council tax payers. Lord Porter encouraged local authorities to push for powers to set business rates to give councils more flexibility. This should be backed up by an independent local-government-led redistribution to balance funding across the country. Members raised the question of how far negative RSG could go, and whether it would result in council tax being taken to support business rate redistribution. It was suggested that there should a ‘floor’ guaranteeing all councils keep a certain amount of their business rate income. Transfer of 100% business rates will include transfer of risks, so the number and scale of appeals are a significant concern for many councils. The LGA will welcome proposals to reform the appeals process and ideas to shape its response to business rates.

**ACTION 4: Mike Heiser’s slides to be circulated to SEEC members.**

**ACTION 5: SEEC to provide input to DCLG and LGA detailing business rate incentives and disincentives for South East local government.**

#### **4. Minutes of SEEC AGM 25 June 2015 and matters arising not elsewhere on the agenda**

4.1 The minutes of the last all-member meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4.2 There was a brief discussion on freezing or increasing SEEC member subscription rates for 2016 -17. An options paper was requested for the SEEC Executive on 22 March.

**ACTION 6: SEEC officers to prepare subscription options for SEEC’s 22 March Executive.**

#### **5. Latest SEEC activity report & updates**

5.1 Members welcomed the updates on SEEC’s recent work. Points raised in discussion were:

- **Data Dashboard:** Nick Woolfenden requested member comments on how SEEC can best use this resource to make the case for the South East before finalising the dashboard to send to MPs and Ministers. Nicolas Heslop encouraged members to share the final dashboard with local MPs.
- **Missing Links:** Nicolas Heslop thanked members for input into the report; it has now been sent to MPs, Ministers and media.
- **Housing and Infrastructure, South East work with London:** Member input for the first Wider South East political steering group was invited. Members agreed the Chairman should co-sign a letter with London Councils and East of England to support Crossrail 2, highlighting benefits of extending the route into the South East. Members also agreed a high level response should be sent to consultation about TfL taking control of suburban rail routes outside London’s boundaries. SEEC should also consider approaching TfL about extending Tramlink into the South East
- **SEEC input into current consultations:** Member input was invited for SEEC responses to CLG national planning policy (deadline 22 February) and New Homes Bonus consultation (deadline 10 March).
- **Syrian Refugees:** An invitation has been sent to Minister Richard Harington to attend a future meeting.

**ACTION 7: SEEC to circulate the Data Dashboard inviting member comments by 10 February.**

**ACTION 8: SEEC to circulate the Missing Links press release to SEEC members.**

**ACTION 9: Chairman to agree a joint letter on Crossrail 2 with London Councils and East of England LGA.**

**ACTION 10: SEEC to respond by 18 March to consultation about TFL control of some South East rail routes.**

**ACTION 11: Members to raise potential issues for the South East Political Steering Group members with Heather Bolton by 1 March.**

**ACTION 12: SEEC members to email consultation issues for consideration to Emma Sutton.**

**6. Confirmed forward meeting dates:**

- **22 March 2016** – SEEC Executive (shared date with SESL)
- **30 June 2016** – SEEC AGM (shared date with SESL)
- **30 September 2016** – SEEC Executive (shared date with SESL)
- **1 December 2016** – SEEC Executive (shared date with SESL)

**7. Any Other Business**

- South West Trains - South West Trains (Stagecoach) has contacted SEEC inviting member councils to discuss their views and aspirations on the forthcoming new South Western trains franchise bid. The franchise covers an area from central and south west London to Surrey, Berkshire, Hampshire, and beyond.

**ACTION 13: SEEC to circulate link and contact details for South West Trains.**

The meeting closed at 15:30

**Signed:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Nicolas Heslop, Chairman**

**SEEC ALL-MEMBER MEETING 29 January: ATTENDANCE LIST**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Signature / Apologies / Substitute</b>
Gillian Brown	Arun District Council	Yes
Gerry Clarkson	Ashford Borough Council	Apologies
Carole Paternoster	Aylesbury Vale District Council	Yes
Clive Sanders	Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council	Apologies
Paul Bettison	Bracknell Forest Council	Yes
Simon Cook	Canterbury City Council	Yes
Barry Wood	Cherwell District Council	Apologies
Myles Cullen	Chichester District Council	Yes
Isobel Darby	Chiltern District Council	Apologies
Jeremy Kite	Dartford Borough Council	Apologies
Paul Watkins	Dover District Council	Sub: Michael Conolly
Angela Glass	East Hampshire District Council	Yes
Gill Mattock	Eastbourne Borough Council	Apologies
Keith House	Eastleigh Borough Council	Apologies
John O'Reilly	Elmbridge Borough Council	Apologies
Neil Dallen	Epsom & Ewell Borough Council	Yes
John Cubitt	Gravesham Borough Council	Apologies
Paul Spooner	Guildford Borough Council	Sub: Tony Rooth
Roy Perry	Hampshire County Council	Sub: Keith Mans
Stephen Parker	Hart District Council	Yes
Peter Chowney	Hastings Borough Council	Yes
Michael Cheshire, MBE	Havant Borough Council	Apologies
Ray Dawe	Horsham District Council	Apologies
Paul Carter, CBE	Kent County Council	Sub: Andrew Bowles
Ron Maskell	Lewes District Council	Apologies
Garry Wall	Mid Sussex District Council	Yes
James Friend	Mole Valley District Council	Sub: Vivienne Michael
Barry Rickman	New Forest District Council	Apologies
Van Coulter	Oxford City Council	Yes
Ian Hudspeth	Oxfordshire County Council	Yes
Tony Page	Reading Borough Council	Apologies
Dr Lynne Hack	Reigate & Banstead Borough Council	Yes
David Burbage, MBE	RB of Windsor & Maidenhead	Yes
Patrick Roberts	Runnymede Borough Council	Apologies
Roland Dibbs	Rushmoor Borough Council	Yes

Peter Fleming	Sevenoaks District Council	Yes
David Monk	Shepway District Council	Yes
Ralph Bagge	South Bucks District Council	Apologies
John Cotton	South Oxfordshire District Council	Apologies
Quentin Edgington	Spelthorne Borough Council	Apologies
David Hodge	Surrey County Council	Sub: Mike Goodman
Moira Gibson	Surrey Heath Borough Council	Apologies
Andrew Bowles	Swale Borough Council	Yes
Gordon Keymer, CBE	Tandridge District Council	Apologies
Chris Wells	Thanet District Council	Apologies
Nicolas Heslop	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council	Yes
David Jukes	Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	Apologies
Robert Knowles	Waverley Borough Council	Apologies
Bob Standley	Wealden District Council	Yes
Roger Croft	West Berkshire Council	Apologies
Sir Barry Norton	West Oxfordshire District Council	Sub: Colin Dingwall
Stephen Godfrey	Winchester City Council	Apologies
John Kingsbury	Woking Borough Council	Apologies
Keith Baker	Wokingham Borough Council	Yes
David Shakespeare, OBE	Wycombe District Council	Apologies
<b>Speakers</b>		
Carrick Casson-Crook	Barratt/David Wilson Homes	Yes
Lord Porter of Spalding CBE	Local Government Association	Yes
Mike Heiser	Local Government Association	Yes
<b>Other Attendees</b>		
Heather Bolton	SEEC	Yes
Nick Woolfenden	SEEC	Yes
Emma Sutton	SEEC/SESL	Yes
Ian Mackie	SEEC	Yes
Heather Wills	LGA	Yes