

SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE MEETING

Friday 30 September 2016

Engineering Employers' Federation

Broadway House, Tothill St, London, SW1H 9NQ



Present:

Nicolas Heslop (Chair)
Roy Perry (Deputy Chair)
David Monk (Secretary/ Treasurer)
Ralph Bagge
Paul Bettison
Andrew Bowles
Peter Chowney
Van Coulter
John Furey
Lynne Hack
Eileen Lintill
Tony Page
Stephen Parker
Carole Paternoster
Bob Standley
Chris Townsend
Clive Woodbridge

In Attendance:

Heather Bolton, SEEC
Nick Woolfenden, SEEC
Neil Border, SESL
Emma Sutton, SEEC/ SESL
Ian Mackie, SEEC
Heather Wills, LGA
Timothy Weadon, Lead Chief Executive
Jon Bird, SELP

1. Apologies, declarations of substitutes and declarations of interest

1.1 John Furey substituted for David Hodge and Eileen Lintill substituted for Myles Cullen. Apologies came from Keith House, David Neighbour and Ian Hudspeth. No declarations of interest were made.

2. Brexit & the new Government: tailoring SEEC's priorities to the new agenda

2.1 Jon Bird from Southern England Local Partners (SELP) highlighted issues to help members consider how Brexit might affect the South East including:

- Allocated EU funding e.g. ESF & ERDF – how could the SE be able to make a case for retaining funding levels equivalent to existing EU allocations post-Brexit.
- Other competitive EU funding e.g. Interreg – no certainty whether Government will fund non-statutory programmes which some councils have used to match-fund local projects e.g. environmental/cultural.
- Transfer of power – Whitehall should not be seen as the default destination for powers transferred back from the EU, so there may be opportunities for South East councils.
- Migration and workforce skills – how to address possible labour shortages in sectors heavily dependent on migrant workers such as care, tourism and agriculture.

2.2 The LGA is looking at EU regulations affecting councils and asking for input on how things could work better for councils post-Brexit. Members agreed SEEC should respond to this.

2.3 In discussion, members raised points including:

- The need for new burden costs if powers are transferred to local authorities.

- Current and potential post-Brexit South East skills shortage and whether free movement of jobs rather than people could offer a solution to skills gaps until local skills were improved.
- The importance of universities' EU funding for research and minimising loss of fees paid by overseas students.
- Which repatriated EU powers councils might want to have control over.
- Economic opportunities for the South East e.g. Inward investment.
- The opportunity for the SE to emphasise its high returns on investment to encourage Government to replace EU funding streams in the SE.
- Need to avoid gold-plating of regulations post-Brexit, whilst maintaining quality and standards i.e. waste and recycling.
- How to minimise impacts on British ex-pats and overseas property owners.
- Possible impact on LEPs and the EU funding programmes they manage.
- How SEEC can help inform/shape the Government's approach to Brexit, to help sustain the South East's economic powerhouse role.

2.4 In discussion on new Government and SEEC priorities, members agreed to make a submission for the forthcoming Autumn Statement. This should include figures for the lost council tax arising from unbuilt homes with planning permission. Concluding the discussion members agreed SEEC's business plan priorities for the next 12 months would be:

- **Funding & economic value post-Brexit** – including council freedoms on fees and charges, South East economic performance and return on investment.
- **Essentials for sustainable growth:**
Infrastructure – including continued promotion of Missing Links with Brexit/airport expansion implications, South East infrastructure needs and funding, and employment skills.
Housing – including work on overcoming barriers to housing delivery – e.g. unimplemented planning permissions, local authority housing companies, appropriate mix of housing/affordability.
- **Health and care** – including care budget pressures.

The data dashboard will continue, plus work with partners on migration and London growth.

2.5 Members agreed meeting topics and formats for All-member events in 2017:

- 27 January All-member meeting – housing delivery joint workshop with LGA, to include good practice examples from South East and beyond; members will be encouraged to invite an additional cabinet member or a senior officer.
- 23 June AGM – skills for economic success workshop.
- Dates would also be sought in 2017 for two possible workshops on - migration and fees, charging & commercialisation.

ACTION 1: SEEC to circulate Jon Bird's [slides](#)

Action 2: SEEC to circulate link to SELP [event](#) 17 October

Action 3: SEEC to circulate LGA dedicated Brexit email address, for members to send points affecting individual councils directly to the LGA team – brexit@local.gov.uk

Action 4: SEEC to feed into LGA Brexit work on regulations and impacts for SE

Action 5: SEEC to circulate UK parliament website links setting out likely impacts of Brexit on [local government](#) and specific [policy areas](#)

Action 6: SEEC to write to Government about the [Autumn Statement](#)

Action 7: SEEC to consider a response to Education Green paper by 12 December

Action 8: SEEC to circulate 2017 meeting dates and topics to all members.

3. **Sub National Transport Bodies**

3.1 Discussing Sub National Transport Bodies (SNTB), members agreed that SEEC should participate in the SE7 officer working group developing the SNTB. This would help develop linkages between the emerging SNTB and SEEC and their respective work.

ACTION 9: SEEC to participate in SE7 Officer working group

4. SEEC membership

- 4.1 Members endorsed the appointment of Cllr Clive Woodbridge (Residents Association, Epsom & Ewell) and Cllr Chris Townsend (Independent, Surrey CC) to the SEEC Executive.
- 4.2 Members agreed to approach non-member councils in a membership drive, and update the Chairman on progress before December's Executive meeting.

ACTION 10: SEEC members to approach non-member authorities and update the Chairman before December's Executive meeting.

5. Minutes of SEEC Executive Meeting 22 March 2016

- 5.1 The minutes were agreed. There were no matters arising.

6. Information updates: Latest SEEC activity report

- 6.1 Members welcomed the updates on SEEC's recent work set out in the meeting paper.
- SEEC members reported a useful meeting of the Wider South East Political Group in July. Members met with Deputy Mayor James Murray and have written jointly to Ministers about how to unlock unused housing planning permissions.
 - The Wider South East Summit will take place on 9 December – all SEEC members will shortly receive invitations.
 - SEEC responded to the consultation on 100% Business rates retention, asking for more transparency and redistribution of funds to reflect SE needs and opportunities.
 - SEEC evidence to CLG select committee on homebuilding capacity will be sent to members when it is published by the committee.
 - The Chairman has written to Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP about South East funding for infrastructure and Jesse Norman MP, Baroness Neville-Rolfe and Jo Johnson MP on their shadowing of SE LEPs and roles as local growth champions.

ACTION 11: SEEC to circulate Joint SEEC, London Councils, East of England and GLA housing barriers ministerial letter.

ACTION 12: SEEC to circulate copies of the SEEC responses to CLG consultation on 100% business rates retention and needs and redistribution.

ACTION 13: SEEC to circulate CLG Select Committee Homebuilding Capacity Inquiry response once published (now available).

7. Confirmed forward meeting dates:

- 1 December 2016 – SEEC Executive (shared date with SESL)
- 9 December 2016 – Wider South East Summit
- 27 January 2017 – All-member Meeting (inc housing workshop with LGA)
- 24 March 2017 – SEEC Executive (shared date with SESL)

8. Any other business

- 8.1 [Tackling modern-day slavery](#): SEEC's joint commissioned films with SESPM will be released on 18 October and circulated to members.
- 8.2 The meeting closed at 3.30pm.

Signed:

Nicolas Heslop, Chairman