

## SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS EXECUTIVE MEETING



Date: 30 September 2016  
 Subject: **SEEC membership**  
 Report of: Heather Bolton, SEEC Director

### Recommendations:

Members are asked to:

- i) Endorse updated membership of SEEC Executive Committee to include smaller party representatives and complete ex officio appointments
- ii) Note the AGM decision on SEEC future subscriptions
- iii) Take responsibility for a recruitment drive to approach lapsed members

### 1. Background

1.1 Membership of SEEC and its Executive Committee have been discussed at the past two member meetings. This paper updates members on:

- Executive Committee membership 2016-17: Smaller parties and ex officio membership
- The work of SEEC's subscriptions task & finish group.

### 2. Executive Committee membership 2016-17

- 2.1 SEEC's constitution restricts Executive seats to political parties who have at least 5% of councillors in the South East. In the May 2016 elections, four smaller parties (Independents, Residents, UKIP and Greens) took a combined 379 council seats and 12.67% share of the vote. If this was a single party it would be entitled to two seats on SEEC Executive but none of the parties individually exceeds the 5% threshold of 174 seats.
- 2.2 SEEC's AGM agreed to consult all four smaller parties on a proposal from an Independent/ Residents' Association coalition to take the two SEEC Executive seats, represented by Cllr Clive Woodbridge (Residents' Association, Epsom & Ewell) and Cllr Chris Townsend (Independent, Surrey CC). Together these two groups have 5.74% of South East councillors.
- 2.3 In July 2016 SEEC Secretariat wrote to leading councillors in all four smaller parties setting out the proposal from the Independent/ Residents' Association, asking for views by 1 September. No objections were received, so members are now asked to endorse the appointment of Cllr Woodbridge and Cllr Townsend to SEEC Executive.
- 2.4 Members are also asked to endorse Cllr Peter Martin (Con, Surrey CC) as an ex officio member of SEEC Executive. This appointment would reflect his involvement in discussions with the London Mayor and East of England via his membership of SEEC's Wider South East Political Steering Group.
- 2.5 The SEEC constitution allows ex officio members to be invited to join the Executive to represent particular issues. Current ex officio members represent SESL (Cllr Paul Bettison, Con, Bracknell Forest) and the district leaders' Chairman and Deputy (Cllr Moira Gibson, Con, Surrey Heath BC and Cllr Stephen Parker, Con, Hart DC). The constitution also allows for up the three topic-based ex officio appointments.

### 3. SEEC subscriptions task & finish group

- 3.1 In March, SEEC Executive agreed that subscriptions for 2016-17 would remain frozen but established a member task and finish group to consider future options for SEEC funding, operations and priorities. The group met in April 2016. It comprises Cllr David Monk, Leader of Shepway DC and SEEC Treasurer; Cllr Roy Perry, Leader of Hampshire CC and SEEC Deputy Chairman; and Cllr Paul Bettison, Leader of Bracknell Forest Council.
- 3.2 The task group made recommendations in three main areas:
  - Membership and subscriptions
  - Business plan
  - Meeting format.

- 3.3 **Membership and subscriptions:** The task group agreed the primary focus should be on increasing SEEC membership. Although SEEC currently has over 70% membership, recruiting additional members would generate more than raising subscriptions for existing members. The group favoured a move to population-based subscriptions but at the SEEC AGM in June members voted to keep current subscription calculations to avoid significant increases for some member councils.
- 3.4 Executive members are asked to undertake a SEEC membership drive, building on local political contacts and relationships, and report back to the Chairman in time for SEEC's December Executive. The SEEC secretariat will provide information to support members' recruitment activities as required.
- 3.5 **Business Plan:** The group recommended a focus on campaigns and proposed a number of topics. Member views on these are invited in today's item 2 on SEEC priorities.
- 3.6 **Meeting format:** The group recommended greater variety in meeting format, including more interactive sessions such as round table discussions or workshops. Member views are invited on suggestions in today's item 2 for future SEEC All-member meetings.