

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



Date: 23 June 2017

Subject: **Political balance on SEEC Executive following May 2017 local elections**

Report of: Heather Bolton, SEEC Director

**Recommendations:**

- i) Note the results of the May 2017 local elections and the implications for allocation of 19 seats on the SEEC Executive.
- ii) Consider offering an unallocated Executive seat to the ‘smaller parties’, as this group’s allocation is closest to meeting the requirements for rounding up to an additional seat.
- iii) Consider a joint proposal from Independent/ Residents’ councillors to continue their cross-party alliance to represent ‘smaller parties’ with 2 seats on the SEEC Executive.

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

- 1.1 SEEC’s constitution sets out the formula for allocating 19 SEEC Executive seats to political parties according to the percentage of votes each party receives across the 74 South East local authorities. This means that seat allocations reflect the share of votes cast for each party, rather than the number of councils they each control. 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.
- 1.2 There are currently three SEEC member councils led by smaller parties (2 x Residents and 1x UKIP). These leaders will be invited to SEEC All-Member meetings and events but are not automatically eligible for an Executive seat as their parties, individually, hold less than 5% of councillor seats South-East-wide.
- 1.3 2017 saw the total percentage of votes for smaller political parties at 7.7% (Independents 3.02%; Residents 1.98%; UKIP 1.62%; Greens 1.09%). A single party receiving 7.7% of votes would secure representation on 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. In past years a formal alliance has emerged to fill Executive seats on behalf of the combined smaller parties group.
- 1.4 The template for Executive seats below reflects the results of local elections on 4 May 2017. Seats are normally rounded up for parties with an allocation that includes a proportion of a seat greater than .5 and rounded down for parties with a proportion of a seat less than .5. This year seats for Labour, Lib-Dem and smaller parties would normally be rounded down, leaving one Executive seat unallocated. After discussion with SEEC Leadership and parties represented on last year’s Executive, the proposal is to apply a principle of rounding up seats for the group nearest to the .5 trigger point. This year, this would round up the smaller parties to 2 seats and round down Labour and Lib-Dem to 2 seats each. Once agreed, the new seat allocations come into effect for today’s elections to SEEC Executive.

**SEEC Executive template based on 2017 election results:**

	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Ind	Residents	UKIP	Greens	Total
N <sup>o</sup> Cllrs	2,367	400	381	114	94	91	27	3,474
<b>% Cllrs</b>	<b>68.14</b>	<b>11.51</b>	<b>10.97</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>2.71</b>	<b>2.62</b>	<b>0.78</b>	<b>100%</b>
% of vote	67.82	12.47	12.00	3.02	1.98	1.62	1.09	100%
Detailed seat allocation	12.89	2.37	2.28	1.47	<b>combined</b> seat allocation. No party alone meets threshold of 5% of cllrs			
Normal rounding	13	2	2	1	(combined smaller parties’ allocation)			18
<b>Proposed rounding allocation</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>(combined smaller parties’ allocation)</b>			<b>19</b>

- 1.5 In parallel with the discussion on allocation of seats, the SEEC secretariat has been contacted by representatives of the Independent and Residents' groups who have proposed continuing their formal alliance to represent smaller parties on SEEC Executive. This alliance has previously been formally endorsed by 5% of South East councillors and has filled two smaller party seats on SEEC Executive for the past two years.
- 1.6 Subject to member approval of recommendations in this paper, the 2017-18 proposal is that two SEEC Executive seats would be held by Cllr Clive Woodbridge (Residents' Association) Epsom & Ewell BC, and Cllr Chris Townsend (Independent) Surrey CC.
- 1.7 If the AGM supports this proposal, the SEEC secretariat would write to leading councillors in member authorities who represent the other two smaller parties (UKIP and Greens) setting out the Independent/ Resident proposal. As in previous years, a letter would give them the opportunity to raise objections in advance of SEEC's next Executive Committee. In past years no objections have been received and the Independent/ Resident representatives have joined the SEEC Executive.

**Contingency arrangements**

- 1.8 If a formal alliance does **not** proceed for any reason, SEEC's October Executive should consider whether they wish to continue with vacant seats or reallocate them between the Conservative, Labour and Lib-Dem parties. Reallocation in line with the percentage share of the votes would give (rounded to nearest whole number): Conservative 14 seats, Labour 3 seats, Lib Dem 2 seats.