

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



Date: 28 June 2018

Subject: **SEEC political balance following May 2018 local elections**

Report of: Heather Bolton, SEEC Director

**Recommendations:**

- i) Note the results of the May 2018 local elections and the implications for allocation of 19 seats on the SEEC Executive.
- ii) Consider offering an unallocated Executive seat to Labour 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 a seat 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 each party controls. 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 is currently one SEEC member council with a leader from a smaller party (Epsom & Ewell, led by Residents' Association). The Epsom & Ewell leader will be invited to SEEC All-Member meetings and events but is not automatically eligible for an Executive seat as the party, individually, holds less than 5% of councillor seats South-East-wide.
- 1.3 2018 saw the combined total percentage of votes for smaller parties at 7.47% (Independents 3.8%; Residents 1.8%; Greens 1.2%; UKIP 0.6%). A single party receiving 7.47% of votes would secure representation on SEEC Executive. However, the votes are split between four parties and none of these parties individually has the 173 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 3 May 2018. Seats are normally rounded up for parties whose allocation 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 all normally be rounded down, leaving one seat unallocated. After discussion with SEEC Leadership and parties represented on last year's Executive, the proposal – as last year – is to apply a principle of rounding up seats for the group nearest to the .5 trigger point. This year, this would **round up** Labour to 3 seats and **round down** Lib-Dems to 2 seats and smaller parties to 1 seat. Once agreed, the new seat allocations come into effect for today's elections to SEEC Executive.

**SEEC Executive template based on 2018 election results:**

	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	Ind	Residents	UKIP	Greens	Total
N <sup>o</sup> Cllrs	2,329	423	398	165	87	36	31	3,469
<b>% Cllrs</b>	<b>67.14</b>	<b>12.12</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>2.51</b>	<b>1.04</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>100%</b>
% of vote	67.2	13.02	12.3	3.76	1.83	0.64	1.24	100%
Detailed seat allocation	12.77	2.47	2.34	1.42	<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>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</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 smaller party seats on SEEC Executive for a number of years. Although there is only one seat available to smaller parties this year, a coalition of more than one party is still required to ensure the nominated Executive member meets the requirement of representing parties who together hold more than 5% of South East councillor seats.
- 1.6 Subject to member approval of recommendations in this paper, the Independent and Residents' groups would put forward a candidate to join the Executive for 2018-19. Alternatively, they may propose to alternate attendance at Executive meetings between last year's representatives, Cllr Clive Woodbridge (Residents' Association, Epsom & Ewell) and Cllr Chris Townsend (Ind, Surrey CC).
- 1.7 If the AGM supports the proposal to offer a joint seat to the Independent and Residents' groups, the SEEC secretariat would write to leading councillors in member authorities who represent the other smaller parties (UKIP and Greens) setting out the 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.

#### **Contingency arrangements**

- 1.8 If a formal alliance does **not** proceed for any reason, SEEC's September Executive should consider whether they wish to continue with a vacant seat or reallocate the vacancy to one of the three main political parties. This year reallocation would give detailed seat allocations of Conservative 13.8, Labour 2.67 and Lib-Dems 2.53. As normal rounding would allocate 20 seats rather than the 19 places available, the suggestion would be to apply the rounding principle set out in para 1.4 once again. This would round up Conservative and Labour seats and round down Lib Dem seats – giving a contingency seat allocation of Conservative 14, Labour 3 and Lib-Dems 2.