

An introduction to South East England Councils



Timothy Wheadon - Chief Executive, Bracknell Forest Council

David Covill – Director, South East England Councils

Who We Are



- Councillor-led membership body
- Open to County, Unitary and District councils in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey & West Sussex.
- A cross-party and cross-tier approach is fundamental to our ethos and our status using influence and expertise relating to all services.
- Focus on shared policy issues to ensure the specific interests and concerns of the South East are heard by Government and other decision makers.
- All agendas and a wealth of other information are public and on our website.
- Additional detailed analysis for members only.



How We Are Organised

All-Member meeting

- Primary policy forum and decisions on appointments
- Periodic themed workshops

Executive

- 19 Members including Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary/ Treasurer and two Vice-Chairs

Officers

- David Covill (Director) and Nick Woolfenden (Head of Policy Coordination) plus resource for policy and administration

Lead Chief Executive

- Timothy Wheadon (Bracknell Forest)

Four Principles

- Strive for a fair funding deal for the South East
- Promote the South East's position as a leading global economy
- Act as a single democratic voice for the South East's interests
- Monitor the pulse of the South East

These must evolve and adapt to current and future challenges facing the South East



Putting the Principles into Practice

Examples from the 2018/19 Annual Review



Influenced decision-makers

- Meeting with Ministers and the Mayor of London
- All Member conference
- Responded to Government consultations
- Speaking at events on behalf of the South East

Local Government Funding

- Submission to a Select Committee inquiry
- Successful lobbying against negative Revenue Support Grant

Putting the Principles into Practice

Examples from 2018/19 (continued)



Working with London

- Represented the South East with the GLA, London Councils and East of England LGA in the Wider South East partnership
- Gave Evidence at the London Plan Examination in Public

Housing & Planning

- Promoted the removal of the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap
- Promoted changes to Permitted Development Rights
- Promoted easing restrictions of the use of Right to Buy receipts
- Shared best practice including modular buildings

Putting the Principles into Practice

Examples from 2018/19 (continued)



Infrastructure, the economy & preparing for Brexit

- Considered evidence from expert speakers
- Meeting with Ministers
- Making the case for South East infrastructure investment
- Proposals on skills & apprenticeships
- Engaged with new Sub-national Transport Bodies

Health & Social Care

- Response to the House of Lords inquiry on social care funding and took part in a roundtable discussion

Putting the Principles into Practice

Examples from 2018/19 (continued)



Migration

- South East Strategic Partnership for Migration is a Home Office funded initiative with its own governance
- SEEC provides overall management
- Work includes training for staff in local authorities and other agencies and supporting Councils to house and support refugees

Data, briefings & media

- Provide 'data dashboards', monthly newsletters and other updates
- Provide articles in national media

Looking Forward



- Business Plan and 2020/21 Budget to be agreed in the autumn. Will be an important opportunity to prioritise and consider how we can best serve the South East and our member authorities.
- Item 5 of this agenda will be a central element.
- How should South East England Councils work with others, not just in the public sector?
- Consider the balance between representation/ making the case for the South East and helping member authorities by being a conduit for best practice and stimulating fresh thinking on matters such as placemaking and economic growth.

Communications and Resourcing



- Leaders/ Member representatives are the central audience but there is limited awareness amongst other Members, officers and the business community.
- We will issue a special edition newsletter next week and ask for your assistance to disseminate widely within your authority, and ask people to subscribe to the monthly newsletter.
- Communications techniques are quite traditional. We will consider other ways to reach out to a wider audience.
- We are a very small organisation but there is a lot of expertise and capacity within member authorities that we would like to tap into. This would help ensure authorities are informing and contributing to our work as well as providing potential economies and development opportunities.