

SOUTH EAST FIRST

The Newsletter of South East England Councils

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News Roundup

London Plan – EiP on transport

The Examination in Public (EiP) on the London Plan is drawing to a close. In May SEEC will be making its final appearance at sessions on transport strategy and transport schemes. Our written submissions address the EiP

questions in matters 76 and 79 on the necessity and adequacy of proposed transport schemes; the prospect of [timely delivery](#) and the [impact of proposed developments](#) on the motorways and trunks roads around London.

Elections update

A total of 57 district and unitary councils across the South East will be holding elections on 2 May. Around 60% of these will be all out elections, with the remaining 40% of councils electing a third of their members. Once all the results are verified SEEC will produce its annual summary on the breakdown of political control across the South East. Elections in the four Buckinghamshire districts have been postponed and will not be held in 2019 due to ongoing work to create a new unitary authority for the area from 2020.

SEEC Dates

27 June SEEC AGM
20 September SEEC Executive
13 December SEEC Executive

Contacts

[Heather Bolton – SEEC Director](#)
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Call for fundamental review of Local Government Finance

SEEC has made proposals for substantial structural change to the local government funding system and for additional resources in its submission to the Housing, Communities & Local Government Select Committee inquiry on Local Government Finance and Spending Review 2019.

SEEC's core argument to Committee Chair Clive Betts MP (pictured) is that local government funding has become overly complex, lacks transparency and that the result is an unfair burden on council tax payers in the South East. The submission proposes an allocation system based primarily on population, with small allocations permitted to address deprivation or rurality. SEEC makes it clear that the funding of social care through the Council Tax is unsustainable as the rate of growth of the South East's older population accelerates rapidly. SEEC encouraged the committee to recommend increased powers for local councils to raise funds for services but also for infrastructure to help address the South East's £15.4bn infrastructure gap (see latest data [dashboard report](#) for details).

The paper goes on to provide evidence that the growing centralisation of UK tax revenues is putting added pressure on local government spending. The document points out the financial challenges across local government and suggests more funds should be made available.

The full text of SEEC's submission will be available once it has been published by the committee.

Closing the skills gap – a proactive approach in the South East

In March SEEC's [Executive meeting](#) focused on skills in the South East to share best practice on proactive steps councils might take to help fill their skills gaps locally. Members expressed strong interest in sharing best practice after the Skills Minister Anne Milton MP encouraged local authorities to take a proactive approach, at a meeting with SEEC in January.

The Executive meeting discussed the opportunities for skills to help ensure the right workforce is available to meet local economic needs and identified issues to raise with Government to further support local authority work

on skills and apprenticeships.

SEEC members heard from a panel with direct experience of projects where local authorities have played a key role in shaping and funding skills initiatives. The panel included: Nigel Duncan, Principal of Fareham College; Tracy Sherriff, Apprenticeship Co-ordinator at West Berkshire Council; Simon Harris, Enterprise Co-ordinator for three West Kent local authorities and Georgina Angele, South East Regional Lead, Careers and Enterprise Company. Examples of specific skills shortages are included in SEEC's 2018 research into the growing [skills gap](#).

In a presentation titled '[Making Council-College Collaboration Work](#)' Nigel Duncan outlined his College's work to support delivery of the Hampshire Country Council/Construction Industry Training Board Construction Skills Fund and capital investment projects to deliver advanced manufacturing and engineering skills. Tracy Sheriff looked at the [challenges raised by the Apprenticeship Levy](#) and [potential solutions](#).

Georgina Angele reported that the drive to improve careers support is progressing well through [networking and engagement with businesses](#). See the article below for a direct way you can help the careers support programme.

Simon Harris gave front line examples of how three local authorities in West Kent are using their economic development teams' connections to support quality careers advice in local secondary schools.

Members shared local examples of how councils are proactively addressing skills needs and highlighted steps Government can take to enable us to do more. SEEC is collating good skills practice examples which will be circulated to members and published online.

Affordable Housing – practical policy changes proposed

SEEC provided [evidence to the Affordable Housing Commission](#) on 4 April, suggesting practical changes to national policy and funding mechanisms to accelerate the delivery of affordable homes as a necessary task to support sustainable communities and economies.

The evidence pointed out that while the South East has provided 110,600 homes in the last three years, the highest delivery rate in the UK, average house prices are up to 12 times average earnings in some areas, so affordable housing is a vital part of the mix.

Our response to the Commission focuses on two key issues - practical suggestions for changes to the powers of councils to maximise the delivery of homes and help for local authorities to secure greater investment in infrastructure, including affordable homes.

SEEC recommendations include: allowing councils to levy charges on unbuilt homes to help tackle slow delivery; a call for a review of the housing need assessment methodology; the prevention of planning by appeal by providing interim protection for submitted draft local plans that meet housing needs; implementation of a toolkit for increasing [land value uplift](#); giving councils greater freedoms to use Right to Buy receipts for more affordable homes; and better local targeting of skills funding for construction.

The submission brought together much of SEEC's thinking around this issue submitted to various Government bodies and inquiries. The submission also reiterated recent calls on the Government to ensure all developments, including those that use Permitted Development Rights (PDRs), make a financial contribution towards infrastructure. We also asked the Commission to support our call to develop a more robust system to ensure that affordable housing and infrastructure commitments made by developers are met and not negotiated down.

'Give an Hour' – your help needed to inspire students

'Give an Hour' is the campaign mobilising small-and-medium-sized businesses and local authority staff to inspire students through sharing experience and coaching. Opportunities to support this campaign include answering young people's questions about careers, taking part in a CV writing workshop or sharing the 'Give an Hour' leaflet (below) with your networks.

The regional lead for the project in the South East is Georgina Angele of The Careers and Enterprise Company, who spoke at March's SEEC Executive skills session. Georgina said she would welcome more senior local authority staff volunteering as Enterprise Advisers in schools and colleges and that she was encouraged by the SEEC response to engaging with local Enterprise Adviser Networks.

To take part or share the information please use the '[Give an Hour](#)' leaflet or contact Georgina Angele at: GAngele@careersandenterprise.co.uk

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