

# SOUTH EAST FIRST

## The Newsletter of South East England Councils

May 2019



### Local elections – the South East results

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### SEEC AGM – 27 June

SEEC AGM on 27 June will include a discussion with Kent MP Rt Hon Damian Green on the South East's economic strengths and risks. Members will also have the opportunity to shape SEEC actions and input to Government and priorities for the coming year.

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### New Director for SEEC

South East England Councils has appointed David Covill as its new Director, replacing Heather Bolton who is stepping down from the role at the end of May after nine years.

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### Funding increase for UASC

SEEC has helped to persuade Government to increase funding to support local authorities caring for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). The Home Office has scrapped the age differentials for national funding rates from April.

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### News Roundup

**Cllr Roy Perry steps aside in Hampshire**

Cllr Roy Perry stood down as Leader of Hampshire County Council on 17 May, after six years in office. He will remain a councillor. Cllr Perry will also continue as SEEC Chairman until the AGM on 27 June, at which he plans to stand for re-election. He will be succeeded as Hampshire CC leader by Cllr Keith Mans.

### **EiP draws to a close**

At the London Plan Examination in Public (EiP) - transport strategy and investment needs hearing - on 7 May, SEEC was represented by Cllr Michael Payne, Kent County Council. The session was SEEC's final appearance at the EiP, which is due to finish this month. The EiP Inspectors are expected to publish their recommendations over the summer. Cllr Payne highlighted the importance of transport investment to help the South East, London and national economies work well together and tackle congestion. He welcomed inclusion of initial key Wider South East transport schemes in the draft London Plan following SEEC member engagement, and emphasised the importance of ongoing political engagement with the Mayor of London on implementation.

### **Seasonal workers' pilot**

A Seasonal Workers [pilot scheme has opened](#), allowing fruit and vegetable farmers nationally to employ up to 2,500 non-EU migrant workers for up to six months. This will help ensure South East farming businesses have access to the staff they need to harvest their crops. Tools are now available for employers to evidence their checks of employees' [right to work](#) and to check the code of practice on [preventing illegal working](#).

### **SEEC Local Government Funding proposals in full**

The full version of SEEC's proposals for structural change to the local government funding system, in the submission to the Housing, Communities & Local Government Select Committee inquiry on Local Government Finance and Spending Review 2019, is now available [here](#), following the committee's publication of the evidence. See also the lead story in the April newsletter.

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#### **SEEC Dates**

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

#### **Contacts**

[David Covill – SEEC Director](#)  
[Nick Woolfenden – Policy Co-ordination](#)

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### **Local elections – the South East results in detail**

At the 2 May local elections 57 South East local authorities held elections, with 13 changes of control. Nine Conservative district councils moved to no overall control (NOC), including Guildford, Folkestone & Hythe and Waverley. The Conservative losses were consistent with the national picture, with some voters switching to LibDems, Labour, Independents and the Green Party. There was a decline in UKIP votes, with just 10 councillors remaining in the South East. In spite of the losses the Conservatives remain the largest party in the region, with 57.7% of the vote. The LibDems are in second place with a 17% vote share and Labour in third place with 14.8%.

There were three Liberal Democrat gains from the Conservatives (Vale of White Horse, Mole Valley and Winchester) and one Labour gain from NOC (Gravesham). The 57 district and unitary authority elections included 'all out' (33) and 'third' (24) votes. Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks & Wycombe districts postponed elections to 2020, due to unitarisation.

Across all 74 South East authorities the breakdown of political control is now:

- Districts – Conservative 30, NOC 15, Lib-Dems 5, Labour 4, Residents 1.
- Unitaries – Conservative 6, Labour 3, NOC 3.
- Counties – Conservative 6, NOC 1.

A SEEC briefing with further detail is available [here](#).

## SEEC AGM – 27 June

The SEEC AGM on 27 June will include a discussion with Kent MP and former Cabinet member Rt Hon Damian Green on the South East's economic strengths and risks. Members will also have the opportunity to shape SEEC actions and input to Government and priorities for the coming year. The AGM will also elect the SEEC Chairman, Leadership team and Executive for 2019-20.

New economic analysis shows that while the South East's economic performance is relatively strong, there are signs that it is not as strong as it could be. SEEC members are concerned that underinvestment from Government and lack of freedoms and flexibilities for councils are putting the South East's economic success at risk. The new analysis looks at what the South East could do even better, for the benefit of the whole country.

The South East is one of only three areas that contribute more to the Treasury than it receives in Government funding, which supports Government spending across the whole country. Members will have the opportunity to discuss the findings of the analysis and steer the SEEC programme of engagement with Government for 2019-20.

The AGM elections will also choose the Chairman, Leadership team and 19 SEEC Executive members for the coming year. SEEC expects to see a number of new faces on the Executive this year as several long-standing members either stood down as councillors or were not re-elected.

## New Director for SEEC

South East England Councils has appointed David Covill as its new Director, replacing Heather Bolton who is stepping down from the role at the end of May after nine years.

David takes up the post full time on 3 June, having worked as a Regeneration Consultant at Havering Council. His previous experience includes Director of Development & Resources at Crawley BC and Assistant Director of Environment & Housing at Brighton and Hove City Council. CIPFA qualified, David started his career at Dartford BC.

Heather has worked with four SEEC chairmen and their political leadership teams over the years. She joined as lead officer in 2010 and was the organisation's first full time member of staff. She established SEEC operations, taking responsibility for overall management and governance, as well as leading on a number of policy issues, public affairs and communications.

Heather's earlier career included roles as Communications Director at the South East England Regional Assembly and a range of senior management and communications roles at organisations including Transport for London, Traffic Director for London and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. She is leaving SEEC to pursue her love of travel, starting with an extended trip to South America.

## Funding increase for UASC

SEEC has helped to persuade Government to increase funding to support local authorities caring for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). The Home Office has scrapped age differentials for the national funding rates and from April this year all UASCs are funded at £114 per child per night (which is the current rate for under 16s). This acknowledges that the costs of supporting 16- and 17-year-olds is the same as those for under 16s and will cover 80% of all UASCs, releasing an additional £34m per year nationally. UASC

aged over 16 were previously funded at a lower daily rate.

The Home Office began a review of funding in 2017 in response to local authority concerns about shortfalls. Funding shortfalls meant local authorities were reluctant to accept UASC placements via the National Transfer Scheme (NTS), which aims to spread the load of caring for UASC evenly across the country. Previously the burden fell most heavily on those authorities with ports of entry in their areas. SEEC and the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration [wrote to the Minister](#) of State for Immigration in 2018 outlining the challenges faced by South East councils, including the funding shortfall that meant local authorities had to subsidise UASC costs from local budgets. SEEC welcomed many of the Home Office initiatives being implemented at the time, including the Safeguarding Strategy and training of more foster carers, but pointed out that without structural change to fund the cost to local authorities of hosting UASCs, there remained barriers to local authorities' ability to participate in the NTS. The new UASC announcement is now on the [Home Office website](#).

This funding settlement is separate to any decision on future funding for Care Leavers aged 18-plus. This is expected to be addressed in the Comprehensive Spending Review later this year.

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