

SOUTH EAST FIRST

The Newsletter of South East England Councils

August 2019



Showing the way in skills

Four case studies illustrate the work of County, Unitary and District Councils with partners to improve skills and help deal with labour shortages. There are over 2.3m people with advanced skills in the South East but also many people with low levels of skills or qualifications. The case studies show different approaches targeted at local needs within Hampshire, Surrey, West Berkshire and West Kent.

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Parliamentary activity

South East England Councils' Chair Roy Perry took the opportunity to write to the new Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government emphasising the importance of the South East to the United Kingdom and outlining the case for investment and greater freedom. South East England Councils also submitted evidence to the Treasury Committee's Inquiry into Regional Imbalances in the UK Economy.

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Future High Streets Fund – mixed success

The Government has identified 100 places that have been shortlisted for support from the Future High Street Fund in two announcements made in July and August 2019. Eight of these are in the South East. It is very good news for those places and congratulations to the councils and their partners.

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2018/ 19 annual review

The annual view of the work of South East England Councils has been published. The highlights report summarises work across a wide range of activity including by the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration

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News Roundup

MJ on-line

MJ on-line published an [article](#) "The South East can deliver just when the UK needs it most" by David Covill, Director of South East England Councils.

Stay informed...and spread the word

South East England Councils is an open and transparent body led by its membership to champion the economy and quality of life in the South East. We want more people to know about our work. As a start we are aiming for a substantial increase in the number of subscribers to our newsletter. Over the coming months we will also be looking at new ways both to encourage wider engagement in our work and communicate even more effectively.

Please forward this newsletter to a fellow Councillor, a work colleague, a partner organisation or anyone with an interest in the South East. They can then subscribe to the service [here](#).

More information

For more information about South East England Councils see our [website](#) or contact the Director, David Covill, email address below.

Dates

20 September - South East England Councils'
Executive
13 December - South East England Councils'
Executive

Contacts

[David Covill – Director](#)
[Nick Woolfenden – Policy Co-ordination](#)
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Showing the way in skills

A skilled workforce is an essential ingredient of success and there are over 2.3m people with advanced skills Level 4+ (diploma, degree or higher) in the South East. At the same time there are many people with low levels of skills or qualifications and employers grappling with labour shortages. South East England Councils has been active in promoting the skills agenda and has lobbied the Government for improvements to the national system and increased funding for local authorities and other providers.

Members of South East England Councils' Executive asked for examples of best practice to be published. [The four case studies](#), which are representative of a much larger number of active partnerships across the South East, are:

The Hampshire Employment and Skills Hub. The construction industry in Hampshire has few young and skilled people ready to replace an ageing workforce. To help close the skills gap within the industry, Hampshire County Council set up the Employment and Skills Hub in 2017. Partners include Basingstoke & Deane BC, East Hampshire DC, Eastleigh BC, Hart DC, Havant BC, New Forest DC and other councils in the area. The project has helped recruit workers for the construction industry - contributing to a stronger skilled workforce to help deliver the homes and infrastructure needed in Hampshire.

Surrey Employment and Skills Board. Surrey County Council set up an Employment and Skills Board to bring together key players in the business community to address skills shortages that risk economic growth and productivity, in particular in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. The Board has wide representation from the private sector, Local Economic Partnerships, education & training providers and local authorities (Surrey County Council, Epsom & Ewell BC, Guildford BC and Tandridge DC).

West Berkshire Council has been successful in making effective use of the Apprenticeship Levy which was

introduced in April 2017 by the Government as a compulsory tax on larger employers to help fund the development and delivery of apprenticeships, improving the quality and quantity. The system has not been without its challenges and South East England Councils and many others have pressed for reforms. As well as being active in supporting other employers across the private and public sector, West Berkshire Council as an employer has been very successful with 118 apprenticeships. The Council appointed an experienced Apprenticeship Coordinator who has worked across all parts of the Council to provide opportunities for new apprentices and existing employees.

The West Kent Partnership covers the areas of Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells. Other partners include Kent CC and Kent Police. Despite West Kent's successful economy, it also suffers from pockets of deprivation where some student outcomes are poor, and often those students who perform well and attend university do not return to the area. The Partnership works with the Careers and Enterprise Company to help improve the outcomes of students in deprived areas and retain graduates by showing them the breadth of opportunities in the area. The work has connected local schools and colleges with employers to provide effective work experience and careers information for young people.

Parliamentary activity

South East England Councils' Chair Roy Perry took the opportunity to write to the new [Prime Minister](#) and [Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government](#) emphasising the importance of the South East to the United Kingdom and outlining the case for investment and greater freedom. Imbalances in the UK Economy inquiry.

The question of 'rebalancing the economy' gaining some prominence including statements by the Prime Minister and an [Inquiry](#) by the Treasury Select Committee. South East England Councils submitted evidence in July 2019. Parliamentary protocol dictates that submissions cannot be published at this stage, but the Select Committee will publish evidence at a later date.

Future High Streets Fund – mixed success

The Government has identified 100 places that have been shortlisted for support from the [Future High Streets Fund](#) in two announcements made in July and August 2019. Eight of these are in the South East - Chatham, Dartford, Dover Town Centre & Waterfront, Portsmouth - Fratton and Commercial Road areas, Newhaven, Ramsgate, Southampton Heart of the City Quarter, and High Wycombe. Councillor Roy Perry (Chair of South East England Councils) commented "it is a good mix of places and I congratulate the Councils and their partners on their success, but only 8 out of 100 from the South East is disappointing. Whilst the South East is relatively successful It is important that the needs of the South East are not neglected.

2018/ 19 annual review

Each year South East England Councils publishes an [annual review](#) in the form of a highlights report. This report summarises an impressive programme of activity across a broad range of subjects, notably:

- influencing decision makers
- Local Government funding
- housing & planning
- infrastructure
- the economy
- skills
- health & social care
- working with London

It also summarises the work of the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration which provides invaluable support to Councils' work with asylum seekers, refugees and migrant children. The Migration Partnership is a

Home Office funded service with its own governance and reporting arrangements but comes within the auspices of South East England Councils.

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