

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS**



**ALL-MEMBER MEETING**

Date: 29 January 2020

Subject: **2020/21 Business Plan and Communications Strategy**

Report of: David Covill, Director

**Recommendation:**

Members are asked to approve the 2020/21 Business Plan including the key messages and Communications Strategy.

**1 Introduction**

- 1.1 South East England Councils will continue to represent the region across a broad range of policy areas using a variety of techniques to make our case, influence debate and share best practice across the region. There will be an emphasis on communication in order to raise the profile and impact of South East England Councils with Government, other decision makers and opinion formers, and within councils.
- 1.2 Executive on 20 September 2019 agreed that the Business Plan should cover the period January 2020 to March 2021 and thereafter align with financial years. The Business Plan should be seen within the context of the 2020/21 Budget approved by the Executive in December which explained that reduced income and the aim to make a lower call on reserves will reduce capacity and necessitate prioritisation and/or changes in approach.
- 1.3 The Business Plan describes:
  - the nature of our activities and techniques employed
  - the policy context following the December 2019 General Election
  - key messages for 2020/21
  - a Communications Strategy

**2 Our activities**

- 2.1 In order to represent local authorities and their communities in the South East we will:

- lobby Government and other decision makers and respond to consultations
- monitor national and regional policy and brief members on the implications for the South East, noting that resource constraints necessitate a targeted approach.
- contribute to national debate
- hold Member meetings including sessions with external speakers
- promote the achievements of councils in the South East and share examples of best practice
- host and support the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration
- represent the South East in the Wider South East Partnership with the Greater London Authority, London Councils and East of England LGA
- represent the South East at the Local Government Association
- participate in South East partnerships
- analyse and produce data to inform and to make the case for the South East
- involve member authorities and attract new members
- communicate our work

2.2 We will continue to promote understanding of the importance of the South East and the risks to the UK as whole if its success is jeopardised through underinvestment or policies which undermine sustainable growth. We will continue to articulate the pressures facing the South East due to factors such as demographics, higher costs, areas of deprivation and housing requirements, and the impact that this is having on residents and businesses. We will promote the strengths of the South East including its natural environment, diverse population, exceptionally strong business base and its locational advantages with strong cultural and transport links to Europe and the rest of the world.

2.3 Meetings will continue to be an important part of South East England Councils' work and a membership benefit. By tradition there are five meetings each year; two all-member meetings at which every council is entitled to send one elected representative, and three meetings of the Executive. The balance of these meetings will be reviewed with the aim on increasing involvement of members and officers. Members are asked to contact officers with suggestions for external speakers and topic areas which may be of interest to councils across the South East.

2.4 There is also a Wider South East Summit to which each local authority in the South East, London and the East of England is invited to send one councillor. The summit is expected to take place in autumn 2020 following the London Mayoral election.

2.5 Members will continue to represent the south East on the Wider South East Political Steering Group and a series of round table meetings for individual local authorities with London Councils and the GLA will take place in 2020.

### **3 National and South East Policy Context**

#### **a) The General Election and Queen's Speech**

- 3.1 The December 2019 election provided some certainty regarding the UK's departure from the European Union. The subsequent Queen's Speech on 19 December 2019 outlined the proposed legislative programme whilst also restating some policy priorities and indicating a number of new spending commitments. The Chancellor's budget in March will be a further milestone in understanding the implications of the Government's approach for public services and for the South East.
- 3.2 Announcements in the Queen's Speech which will be of most relevance to the work of South East England Councils in 2020/21 include:
- The EU (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill with associated legislation including an Agriculture Bill and Immigration Bill, the latter which may impact on the South East economy as well as the work of the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration.
  - Social Care – the Queen's Speech indicated a need to achieve consensus. The Prime Minister has subsequently committed to publishing proposals in 2020 but without indicating a clear policy direction.
  - Housing - measures including support for affordable homes and first homes, reform to shared ownership models, a Renters' Reform Bill and a Social Housing White Paper.
  - Infrastructure - a National Infrastructure Strategy, a Single Housing Infrastructure Fund, a Shared Prosperity Fund, a Planning White Paper for critical infrastructure, and improvements to broadband.
  - Education – various funding commitments including the creation of a National Skills Fund.
  - English Devolution – a White Paper with plans for full devolution allowing each part of the country to 'decide its own destiny', increasing the number of Mayors and doing more devolution deals.
  - An Environment Bill – a range of measures across air quality and pollution, recycling and water supply. A new independent regulator will be established
  - Climate change - the Queen's Speech referred to subsequent funding announcements including energy efficiency and flood defences.
  - Business Rates - a fundamental review will be undertaken with interim measures put in place, and a revaluation in 2021.
  - Rail - a White Paper on rail reform following the Williams Review. Restated commitments to invest in rail in the North and Midlands as well as commuter lines outside London.

## **b) Rebalancing the Economy**

- 3.3 A recurring theme in has been the question of 'rebalancing the economy' and specifically focusing investment in the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine areas, both of which had Ministerial champions. A Treasury Select Committee commenced an inquiry into 'rebalancing' and other initiatives included the UK 2070 Commission.
- 3.4 The General Election campaign gave added impetus to this and the Government has indicated its intention to "level-up" and as one Minister put it, "drive growth outside London and the South East". South East England Councils has a robust justification for promoting the interests of the South East. It should also look for any opportunities that may arise from 'rebalancing', for example to argue for reductions in centrally imposed growth.

## **c) Other key events in 2020/21**

- 3.5 The publication of the Mayor's final London Plan is expected in early 2020 following conclusion of the Examination-in-Public and Inspection process. The nature of future work between South East England Councils, the East of England LGA, the Greater London Authority, London Councils and individual local authorities is under consideration by the Member Political Steering Group. A series of meetings between local authorities and the GLA and London Councils is being facilitated by South East England Councils and the East of England LGA.
- 3.6 The region's sub-national transport bodies (Transport for the South East and England's Economic Heartland) are preparing bids for statutory status and detailed strategy proposals. South East England Councils will support the case for investment and other proposals made by the transport bodies to achieve a more integrated, modern and reliable transport network.

## **d) Policy Initiatives and Best Practice**

- 3.7 A new Government with a large volume of planned legislation will to an extent determine how limited officer resources will be deployed. South East England Councils can however still identify policy issues on which it can take the initiative and develop an independent policy position.
- 3.8 South East England Councils is also a network for authorities to share best practice. Members are encouraged to provide case studies which can be shared, for example in the monthly newsletter

## **4 Organisational context**

- 4.1 The majority of Councils in the South East are members which is important to South East England Councils' standing as the organisation which is able to speak on behalf of local government in the region. The commitment of all political parties to promote growth in the North of England and the Midlands and statements to the effect that

South East has been treated favourably may galvanise the various representative organisations in the South East to work more closely and to rationalise. In the absence of any clear progress however, South East England Councils plans to remain a separate and sustainable organisation

- 4.2 Two councils submitted resignations in 2018/19 which are due to take effect on 1 April 2020. Local Government reorganisation in Buckinghamshire will reduce membership further. We must focus on ensuring that member authorities see the benefits of membership strong enough to continue their subscription and non-members are attracted by the offer and the visible impact that South East England Councils is making. It is important to the future of South East England Councils that Members use all opportunities to act as advocates in their contacts with other local authorities, and indeed within their own.
- 4.3 A reduction in membership since 2012 has increased the reliance on reserves to sustain the organisation. The 2020/21 Budget approved by the Executive in December 2019 achieves a reduction in the use of reserves but requires a reduction in costs. Proposals will be brought forward in Spring 2020.

## 5 **Communications Strategy and Messages**

### a) Approach

- 5.1 Effective communication is central to the work of South East England Councils. We must have effective, clear and consistent messages that can be tailored to different audiences (national and local) and shared in a timely way. The policy position must reflect current representation from member authorities and be relevant to a fluid national policy and political environment.
- 5.2 The level of interaction between South East England Councils and its member authorities will be an important measure of success in 2020/21. This will include ensuring that views put forward, for example in response to Government legislation, reflect the current views of elected Members and are informed by the technical expertise of officers within member authorities.

### b) Messages, narrative and asks

- 5.3 To help achieve our objective of effective, clear and consistent messages delivered in a timely way, for each of four subject areas (Funding, Economy and Infrastructure, Housing & Planning and Environment and Places) the Communications Strategy sets out a position statement comprising:
- an overall message
  - a fuller narrative explaining the context and giving key facts which will be used to explain the rationale for our position and our asks
  - our asks for 2020/21. These are tangible objectives that we will emphasise at every opportunity.
- 5.4 A summary of South East England Councils' position and key asks for 2020/21 is set out in Appendix 1. The full Communications Strategy and detailed messaging is in

Appendix 2. These will be reviewed throughout the year as details of the Government's legislative programme and financial plans become clear.

- 5.5 The summary document is intended to be a document that Members can easily refer to whilst fulfilling their roles including working with private and public sector partners. Members of Parliament are also a target audience and one of the most effective ways of communicating South East England Councils' position will be the direct contact that Members have with their local MPs throughout the year.

## **6 Conclusion**

- 6.1 This Business Plan sets the basis of South East England Councils' work in 2020/21. It also sets out our Communication Strategy as we seek to maximise our impact in a changing media environment and with a new Government to influence.
- 6.2 The Business Plan will be kept under review and must be seen in the context of future resource constraints.

**David Covill**

**Director**

## South East England Councils

### Key Messages January 2020



#### 1 FUNDING

The South East receives the **lowest public expenditure in the country** with revenue funding **30% below the national average**. It makes a **net contribution of £20bn** to Central Government which funds investment in other parts of the UK. **It is a myth** that the South East is treated better than other areas.

The number of people aged **75+ is the highest in the country and set to double**.

Local areas in the South East are facing a **funding crisis** that risks damaging the very fabric of our communities.

##### In 2020/21

- Government needs to reintroduce multi-year funding settlements with fewer funding streams, less ‘ring-fencing’ and full recognition of **higher costs in the South East**.
- Government must consult on concrete policy proposals regarding the long-term provision and funding of **services to adults and children**
- **Funding and freedoms** should be devolved to individual councils and not just elected Mayors, regional bodies or centrally prescribed partnerships.

#### 2 HOUSING & PLANNING

The South East has delivered more than **100,000 new homes** over the last three years – the highest in the country. Many more could be built if there was investment in infrastructure and councils had additional powers.

Planning permission has been granted to developers for another 100,000 homes which **remain unbuilt** which means councils are forced to instead identify even more sites.

House prices are **12 times average earnings** and **40% above the UK average** so delivery of affordable housing must be a priority for central as well as local government.

##### In 2020/21:

- Government must give councils more **powers to ensure planning consents are acted upon** – specifically to amend compulsory purchase orders legislation, allow charges for unimplemented permissions, and to insist that substantial progress on construction works has been undertaken for permission to be renewed.
- Increased funding for **affordable housing** should be available to all providers. Councils should be able to keep 100% of Right to Buy without restrictions and have flexibility about the level of reduction offered.
- Government must instigate an **immediate review of Permitted Development Rights** to improve standards, deliver affordable housing and protect jobs.

### 3 ECONOMY & INFRASTRUCTURE

The South East is a major generator of income for the UK and taxation for the Government but **underinvestment by the private and public sectors jeopardises international competitiveness and exports**, holds back those parts of the South East which perform less strongly, and fails to help people reach their potential.

The South East is the largest exporter of goods and a gateway to international markets but **public expenditure on transport is 15% below** the national average.

There are almost **900,000 people with low skills or no formal qualifications**. **Productivity has not increased** over the last decade.

#### In 2020/21

- Government should appoint a **Minister for the South East** to champion the region, improve understanding in Whitehall regarding the area's strengths and weaknesses, and to work with councils and partners so that all communities prosper.
- Government should support the region's sub-national transport bodies and commit to raise public **expenditure on transport** per head of population in the South East to **at least the national average** within five years.
- A **National Infrastructure Strategy** should be accompanied by legislation to ensure that infrastructure is in place before new housing development takes place.

### 4 ENVIRONMENT & PLACES

The South East environment is a **precious resource** which we want to protect and enhance for the benefit of future generations. This means balancing distinct factors and recognising the competing pressures which are faced.

More than **40% of the region is covered by Green Belt, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Sites of Special Scientific Interest** but the planning system does not take sufficient account of this which **creates huge pressure** on other areas.

#### In 2020/21

- Councils should have freedom to set higher than minimum building standards in order to achieve higher levels of **sustainability, including carbon neutral homes**. Government should further incentivise owners and occupiers of residential, business and other properties to retrofit premises to achieve higher environmental standards.
- Government should use its powers and resources to provide sufficient private and public sector funding for major infrastructure investment to **prevent and address the consequences of climate change** including flooding.
- Measures should be taken to encourage or require manufacturers to **reduce packaging and ensure clear labelling** to maximise recycling rates.
- Government should assess in the round the impact of national policies which have the greatest impact on **High Streets** rather than relying on a piecemeal series of one-off or temporary initiatives.

## South East England Councils

### Communications Strategy



This communication sets out our approach and our key messages, narrative and asks for 2020/21. It will be reviewed throughout the year in response to events as the detail of the Government's legislative programme and financial plans become clear

### Our approach, techniques and audiences

South East England Councils must have **effective, clear and consistent messages** that can be tailored to different audiences and shared in a timely way. We must maximise our impact and be a body that people look to for an opinion. We should be prepared to be robust and to be outspoken when necessary

Increasingly **timeliness** means making an immediate comment or response, for example many organisations will make statements on the day of a Government announcement using social media in order to influence debate and be visible in representing their area or sector. In other cases, timely means consulting member authorities and preparing formal submissions over several weeks. Formal communication such as contact with Ministers and other decision makers, and responses to consultations by Government, Parliamentary Committees and other bodies will remain central to our work but be enhanced by increased use of other techniques.

A major strength of South East England Councils is that it represents **county, unitary and district councils across the political spectrum**. Our overall approach therefore is to aim for a position which is shared by all councils regardless of tier or political control but without being non-committal or bland. We will provide a balanced argument if there are cases where there is no consensus.

Our **communication techniques** will continue to evolve. We will review the effectiveness of our communications methods seeking feedback from those who receive or view our newsletter and other information, or who participate in events. We will build up our social media activity (currently Twitter created in September 2019) to put forward our views and ideas, show support to others including member councils, and challenge statements which we disagree with when appropriate.

Communication is **two-way process** and frequent engagement with members and officers within councils and is very important.

It is essential to identify potential **audiences** and then, given limited resources, target those with the greatest relevance to the work of South East England Councils. These will include:

- nominated representatives of member authorities
- councillors within member authorities (c. 2,000)
- officers within member authorities
- South East MPs
- Ministers and Government Departments
- non-member councils
- the Wider South East Partnership/ Mayor of London
- sub-national transport bodies
- Local Government Association
- other public bodies, e.g. Environment Agency and Homes for England
- national and local media
- business organisations (e.g. LEPs) and residents

## Our messages, narrative and asks

To help achieve our objective of effective, clear and consistent messages delivered in a timely way, the position statements below set out across four subject areas:

- **an overall message**
- a fuller **narrative** explaining the context and giving key facts which will be used to explain the rationale for our position and our asks
- our **asks** for 2020/21. These are intended to be tangible objectives which we will use repeatedly through the year.

The position statement is **not a definitive script** which covers every service area or every eventuality. Content will be tailored depending on the circumstances and audience, and there will inevitably be matters which arise which cannot be foreseen at this time, in particular with a new Government putting forward legislative proposals the detail of which will not be known for some months. It will therefore be a 'live' document which will evolve and be updated through the year. It does however form the basis of our work and our immediate responses, so it is important that Members endorse the approach and overall content.

## FUNDING

### Our message

Local areas in the South East are facing a funding crisis that risks damaging the very fabric of our communities. Funding for councils needs to recognise genuine need and provide us with the ability to serve our communities.

### Our narrative

The South East receives the lowest revenue financial settlement per head of population than any other part of the country – over 30% below the national average. The total of public sector expenditure (capital and revenue) is also the lowest in the country.

This is despite the fact that demographics and living costs are placing huge financial pressures on the South East, and the area's infrastructure needs massive investment to maintain economic competitiveness.

The South East has the highest proportion of elderly residents in the country as well as a rapidly ageing population, and the cost of providing services is higher.

All social care budgets, and education budgets such as services for pupils with Special Educational Needs, are under extreme pressure with increasing demand and higher costs in the South East. These pressures are having a knock-on impact on the ability of South East councils to provide other services which residents value

All major political parties make statements to the effect that priority must be given to other regions in order to rebalance the economy. There are however more than 900,000 living in income deprivation in the South East. South East England Councils believes that Government must invest and promote growth in every part of the country – including the South East.

Every council in the country should have a fair level of funding to serve its residents and businesses properly and the system for local government finance needs to be transparent.

A greater proportion of local authorities' expenditure is funded by the Council Tax payer in the South East than is the case in most other parts of the country, and many of our local authorities get no general local government grant at all. Councils in the South East however have less freedom than in many other areas.

Government sets Council Tax referenda caps ignoring the fact that councils are accountable to their electorates for Council Tax decisions with some authorities even having annual elections.

Specific areas of funding pressure for the South East include support for refugees and asylum seekers with councils receiving insufficient funding to support people in genuine need. In particular Government must recognise the cost of providing support to vulnerable unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and former unaccompanied children as Government funding for accommodation costs is wholly insufficient and additional costs such as of social work, education as health interventions are not fully recognised.

## Our Asks

Government should provide certainty to the sector by reintroducing multi-year funding settlements. The allocation of funding should be simpler and more transparent with fewer funding streams and less 'ring-fencing'. There should be full recognition of higher costs in the South East.

Government should remove the Council Tax cap and the requirement for local referenda. Councils should have greater freedoms on Council Tax exemptions and discounts, and on setting charges for services.

Government must consult on concrete policy proposals regarding the long-term provision and funding of services to adults and children.

Government should move away from the assumption that funding and freedoms can only be devolved to elected Mayors, regional bodies or other arrangements determined centrally. Individual local authorities should be given more freedom.

Government should move quickly to publish the consultation on the replacements for EU funds notably infrastructure, environment and agriculture.

Government needs to adequately resource the costs of supporting refugees and asylum seekers and take urgent action to increase funding for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and those leaving care.

## HOUSING AND PLANNING

### Our message

The South East has delivered more than 100,000 new homes over the last three years, but many more could be built if councils had additional powers and there was the investment for vital infrastructure to support growing communities.

### Our narrative

Although the South East has delivered over 100,000 homes over the last three years, it is estimated that planning permission has been granted for another 100,000 homes which remain unbuilt. We recognise that the development process can take time even after permission is granted (2 to 3 years is very common) but many sites remain undeveloped for far longer. Some developers demonstrate little urgency and play the system by undertaking minimal works in order to avoid planning permission expiring. Councils have little power to make sure these homes are built.

Having so many sites with planning permission remaining undeveloped creates pressure for more sites to be found. Given so much of the South East is covered by Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest and national parks, it can be extremely difficult for councils to find the space for new housing.

The average house price in the South East is 12 times average earnings so more needs to be done to deliver affordable housing.

Government policy on permitted development rights is leading to many homes which are not fit for purpose, in the wrong locations and leading to the loss of jobs and a lack of affordable housing that communities need. Enabling developers to cut corners on quality and avoid delivering affordable housing is storing up problems for the future.

There is an acute lack of social rented housing in the South East. Councils that own their housing stock face having to sell homes at a discount and then losing part of the capital receipt. Local authorities must have flexibility on the level of discount granted, and the ability to retain all receipts to invest in new homes.

Affordable housing of all types is essential, but developers too often make a justification to provide levels below the local authority's policy requirement and look to Planning Inspectors to support their case.

The lengthy Local Plan and Inspection process makes it more difficult for authorities to implement current policy objectives in a timely way.

## Our Asks

Government must take action to give councils more powers to ensure planning consents are acted upon – specifically to amend compulsory purchase legislation to give local authorities greater power to force developers to sell sites which have been left undeveloped for an unreasonable amount of time, to charge developers for unimplemented permissions (e.g. allowing Council Tax to be levied) and require more substantial progress on construction works to have been undertaken for permission to remain valid.

Increased funding for affordable housing should be available to all providers. Councils should be able to keep 100% of Right to Buy receipts without restrictions so replacement affordable homes can be delivered and have flexibility about the level of reduction offered at a local level.

Government should instigate an immediate review of Permitted Development Rights with the aim of improving standards, delivering affordable housing and supporting employment. Immediate action should be taken to set minimum standards.

Government should review the standard methodology for assessing housing need to take account local circumstances including demand for affordable housing and the amount of protected land and avoid setting an unhelpful or unrealistic starting points for councils.

## ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUTURE

### Our message

The South East is a major generator of income for the UK and taxation for the Government. The better the South East does the better it will be for everyone because its contribution to the national economy will be greater. Under investment in infrastructure (by the public and private sectors) and in skills jeopardises competitiveness and exports, holds back those parts of the South East which perform less strongly, and fails to help people reach their potential.

### Our narrative

The South East generates over £100bn of tax revenues every year and makes a net contribution of almost £20bn to the national exchequer. This is at risk if the Government is complacent and investment in the region is neglected.

We support investment in other parts of the country as all regions should be given the opportunities to grow and thrive. All major political parties however say that they want to focus investment away from the South East.

The transport network is not fit for purpose, and a major source of frustration for residents and businesses, and a deterrent for investors. East-West routes are particularly poor. London's excellent public transport network barely reaches into the South East.

Some areas have poor broadband and mobile phone coverage, some even relying on 3G coverage. Local authorities are having to step-in and fund improvements that the private sector should be delivering.

Productivity in the South East has not increased over the last decade, which is worrying for the second strongest region of our national economy.

The South East is one of the UK's strongest assets and it should be a concern that its economic performance has been sluggish in comparison to other areas, especially when the UK is poised to open itself up to the global market place.

The region is the largest exporter of goods in the UK and a huge gateway for the UK for world trade and inward investment. Businesses that relocate from the South East are just as likely to move abroad as they are to move to other parts of the UK, so we need to nurture the region now.

The South East has the joint largest number of low skilled residents along with the North West, and education expenditure is 10% below the national average. A practical example of the impact of is that skills shortages in the construction sector which is holding back the delivery of housing and economic growth.

The South East has the fourth highest population living in income deprivation in the country, with more than 900,000 in this position. Despite this a myth perpetuates that all is well in the South East.

## Our Asks

Government should introduce a Minister for the South East to champion the region, improve the level of understanding in Whitehall regarding the area's strengths and weaknesses, and work with councils and partners to deliver the investment required for the South East to fulfil its potential.

Government should support the region's sub-national transport bodies in their work to develop priorities for the region and commit funding by increasing public expenditure on transport per head of population to at least the national average within five years and using its influence and powers to increase investment by private operators.

Government should devolve responsibility and funding for skills to a local level with local authorities given the primary role and a duty to work in partnership across the private and public sectors.

Government must publish a National Infrastructure Strategy with accompanying legislation and funding commitments to ensure that infrastructure is in place before housing developments are complete.

Government should set a clear timetable for delivering 100% superfast fibre broadband across the region.

## ENVIROMENT AND PLACES

### Our message

The South East environment is a precious resource which we want to protect and enhance for the benefit of future generations. This means balancing distinct factors and recognising the competing pressures which are faced.

### Our narrative

Councils across the South East have declared climate emergencies and are committed to a carbon neutral future. They are showing leadership include addressing the way that they deliver services and use their assets.

Councils in the South East face a delicate balancing act due to high levels of development need, acute transport and congestion pressures, and a genuine need and desire to protect and enhance the natural environment

Not only does the South East have large areas of Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, national parks and Sites of Special Scientific Interest it also has areas of great environmental importance within its cities, towns and villages. At the same time, it has one of the highest pressures to build new homes in the country. National Planning Policy does not give sufficient recognition to this tension

Councils want developers to play their full part and commit to the use of sustainable construction and use of energy and water, and carbon neutral development. Government however must give councils adequate legislative powers and incentivise developers and owners of existing properties.

Many environmental funding streams currently come via the EU and will disappear post-Brexit with no clarity on what will replace them.

The consequences of major climate change events on the South East, such as flooding, are also severe. As well as the immediate impact on residents and businesses, these pose serious risk to economic activity.

### Our Asks

Councils should have the freedom to set higher than minimum building standards in order to protect the environment and require developers to address all aspects of sustainability including energy and transport.

Government should further incentivise owners and occupiers of residential, business and other properties to retrofit premises to achieve higher standards.

Measures should be taken to encourage or require manufacturers to reduce packaging and ensure clear labelling to maximise recycling rates. Legislative requirements relating to the environment need to be properly funded (e.g. recycling proposals for food and plastics) with councils given flexibility to adapt policies to achieve environmental goals.

Government must provide sufficient funding for major infrastructure investment to address climate change (e.g. flooding) and that this funding needs to correctly reflect issues such as economic impact.

Government should assess in the round the impact of policies which have the greatest impact on high streets (notably business rates, planning and infrastructure funding) rather than relying on a piecemeal series of one-off or temporary initiatives.