

Paula Barker MP

Shadow Minister for Devolution and the English Regions
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

14 September 2023

Dear Shadow Minister for Devolution and the English Regions,

On behalf of South East Councils (SEC), we offer our congratulations on your appointment as Shadow Minister for Devolution and the English Regions.

SEC is a representative body of 44-member councils and serves as the voice of most local authorities across the South East of England. We are a cross-party association that campaigns to ensure that the South East is a great place to work, live and do business.

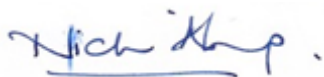
Published twice a year, our South East 1,000 regional monitor, sees SEC partner with Savanta ComRes to produce the largest and most authoritative regular survey of councillor, business and public opinion in the region. This includes *devolution*. Our last issue found that confidence in the decision-making of Councils (50%) was double that in central Government (25%), and that the main preference was for any devolution of powers for was to their town, city or borough level (39%).

In October 2022, SEC co-hosted Tomorrow's South East – Summit of the South East with Localis think-tank and The MJ, bringing together place leaders to discuss shared challenges and structures of local government. This followed an inquiry by the *APPG for the South East, chaired by Sally-Ann Hart MP with SEC serving as secretariat*; it highlighted challenges and deprivation in the South East, underscoring the need for levelling up within the region as much as in parts of the North and Midlands.

Moving forward, SEC will be considering appropriate fiscal levers for financial devolution in the region in our proposed *South East Finance Commission (SEFC)*. It aims to undertake an investigation akin to the London Finance Commission and is expected to report early next year.

With more control over its destiny the South East can do and deliver more for the whole country. We look forward to working with you, on what we hope is a shared ambition.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Nick Adams-King
Chair, South East Councils
Deputy Leader of Test Valley Borough Council
Conservative Party



Cllr Jason Brock
Deputy Chair, South East Councils
Leader of Reading Borough Council
Labour Party



Cllr Keith House
Deputy Chair, South East Councils
Leader of Eastleigh Borough Council
Liberal Democrats



Cllr Hannah Dalton
Deputy Chair, South East Councils
Leader of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council
Independent Group