

DUE DILLIGENCE: ASSURANCE STATEMENT

All-Party Parliamentary Group for the South East

Produced by the secretariat South East Councils on: 23/09/2024.

1. Summary

1.1. From *16 October 2023* a new rule came into effect prohibiting APPGs from accepting secretariat services that are either provided or funded by a foreign government.

1.2. This statement is being issued in response to due diligence by the Officers of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the South East (APPG SE) to ascertain whether the ultimate funder of any benefit to the APPG is a foreign government.

1.3. This statement declares that APPG SE is not provided by or funded by a foreign government.

1.4. This statement will be made publicly available on our website: <https://www.secouncils.gov.uk/appg-south-east>.

2. The All-Party Parliamentary Group for the South East

2.1. APPG SE provides a forum for Parliamentarians to discuss, with others, how to promote and develop the South East region as a great place to live, work and do business.

3. The Secretariat

3.1. **South East Councils (SEC)** acts as the secretariat to APPG SE.

3.2. SEC is a cross-party membership association that works to ensure the South East England region is a great place to live, work and do business.

3.3. With most local authorities as members, we seek to provide a unified democratic voice on South East interests.

3.4. SEC hosts the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM), one of twelve Regional Strategic Migration Partnerships covering the UK (one in each English region and one in each devolved administration), which provides a leadership, co-ordination, and advisory function for migration in the South East. SESPM is funded by the Home Office. SEC handles its finances, but SESPM and SEC are operationally independent.

3.5. SEC is also an associate member of the Local Government Association (LGA).

4. Questions and Answers

4.1. Who are the individuals forming or working for the secretariat? What other responsibilities do they have, and are they working for, or on behalf of, a foreign government?

4.1.1. **Answer:** *The individuals currently working for the secretariat are the current Director of SEC Sean McKee and current Policy Manager at SEC Harry Cavill. They report to the Executive Board of SEC, who as in SEC's constitution, are elected representatives of member councils across the South East of England, weighted by party to reflect the most recent result of the local elections. The Board and its Members are available to view here: <https://www.secouncils.gov.uk/members>.*

4.2. Are the individuals in the secretariat paid, employed, or voluntary? If they are employed or paid, by whom, and who is funding them?

4.2.1. **Answer:** *The individuals in the APPG secretariat are paid employees working for South East Councils (SEC).*

4.3. If the secretariat is provided by a company or group, how is that company or group funded?

4.3.1. **Answer:** *As a voluntary membership association of councils in the South East of England, SEC is funded by membership fees paid for by its member councils. Membership is available to view here: <https://www.secouncils.gov.uk/members>.*

4.4. Is any person involved in the secretariat funded, directly or indirectly, by any foreign government?

4.4.1. **Answer:** *No.*

4.5. Does the company, group or individual providing the secretariat, the funding for the secretariat, or other benefit, have a website, or other publicly available online presence? Does this state or imply a link to any foreign government?

4.5.1. **Answer:** *SEC's website is available here: <https://www.secouncils.gov.uk/>. The website implies no links to any foreign governments.*

4.6. Does the company, group or individual providing the secretariat appear in press stories, or on other websites or other openly available social media sites, in connection to foreign governments, now or in the past?

4.6.1. **Answer:** *SEC has appeared in multiple press stories (e.g. <https://www.themj.co.uk/South-East-Councils-to-consider-devolution-of-vehicle-excise-duty/230689> & <https://www.themj.co.uk/Government-gets-the-fiscal-challenge-says-Scully/224414>) and has a public Twitter/X profile (<https://twitter.com/SECouncils>). These have no links or connection with any foreign governments.*

4.7. Are they registered in the UK? Do the registered officers of the company tell you anything about its ownership or links to foreign governments?

4.7.1. **Answer:** SEC's office address is made clear on our website. It is: South East Councils, First Floor, Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 1HG I the United Kingdom. There are no links to any foreign governments, including on the website and when considering the address.

5. Publicly Available Sources

5.1. SEC Website: <https://www.secouncils.gov.uk/>

5.2. SEC Membership: <https://www.secouncils.gov.uk/members>

5.3. SEC Twitter/X: <https://twitter.com/SECouncils>

5.4. SESPM: <https://www.secouncils.gov.uk/about-us/migration-partnership>

5.5. SE APPG: <https://www.secouncils.gov.uk/appg-south-east>

6. Officer Due Diligence

6.1. I the undersigned confirm that due diligence has been undertaken to ensure that a foreign government **is not** the ultimate funder (of any benefit) of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the South East secretariat, as required by the House's approval of the Committee on Standards' report on APPGs coming into effect on 16 October 2023.



Date: 27/09/2024

Tan Dhesi MP

Chair, South East All-Party Parliamentary Group

Member of Parliament for Slough

House of Commons, London

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