



**East of England**  
All Party Parliamentary Group

**AGM and Inaugural Meeting**

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2017 - Committee Room 11, House of Commons**

**Parliamentarians in attendance:**

Daniel Zeichner MP (Lab, Cambridge)  
Peter Aldous MP (Con, Waveney)  
Lucy Frazer MP (Con, South East Cambridgeshire)  
Sandy Martin MP (Lab, Ipswich)  
Jo Churchill MP (Con, Bury St Edmunds)  
Clive Lewis MP (Lab, Norwich South)  
Rt. Hon. Lord Heseltine

**Others in attendance:**

James Palmer, Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough  
Martin Whiteley, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CA  
Tom Hunt, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CA  
Cllr Vaughan Thomas, Norwich City Council  
Andrew Carter, Centre for Cities  
Graeme Elliot, Manchester Airport Group  
Chris Wiggan, London Stansted Airport  
William Hall, London Stansted Airport  
Ruth Day, British Sugar  
Andrew Marshall, British Sugar  
Christopher Hayton, Anglian Water  
Jacob Wallace, Anglian Water  
Andrea Kells, University of Cambridge  
Aaron Cohen-Gold, University of Cambridge  
Neil Ward, University of East Anglia  
Jenny Jenkin, University of Bedford  
Norman Jennings, Hertfordshire LEP  
Gill Morris, DevoConnect  
Steve Barwick, DevoConnect  
Paul Beckford, DevoConnect

## 1. Welcome and Introduction

**Daniel Zeichner** opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and Parliamentarians before providing a brief outline of the political need for an APPG for the East of England. He then introduced the keynote speaker, the Rt. Hon. Lord Heseltine.

## 2. Keynote Address

**Lord Heseltine** stated that the key issue for the East of England is not growth but rather how to manage and spread that growth in a strategic and effective manner.

He outlined how there have been similar challenges all the way back to 1968 and admitted he felt despondent by the failure of politicians to address the crucial issues in a coordinated way. He highlighted that key issues across the East of England remained education, skills and transport connectivity.

Lord Heseltine then explained how the spider web of organisations charged with some element of local governance created unnecessary rivalries and tensions that ultimately weakened the position of the entire region. He concluded by calling for a robust purpose for the APPG.

**Peter Aldous** echoed the comments made by Lord Heseltine and highlighted the important political role that the APPG could play. Similarly, **Sandy Martin** stressed the need for strong local governance that supported the strong regional imperatives the East of England has in common, including travel to work areas, up-skilling the workforce and provide the transport infrastructure required to facilitate economic growth. **Lucy Frazer** stated that the East of England is vital for the economy and the crown jewel of the UK. She highlighted three priorities for the APPG: skills and infrastructure, bringing politicians from across the region together and proactivity lobbying government as a collective.

**James Palmer (Mayor of Cambridge and Peterborough)** stated that he felt that the failure to deliver a three county deal was a missed opportunity but that he was determined to use his role to help provide a unified voice for the East of England. He would certainly welcome the growth of the Combined Authority. He also agreed with Lord Heseltine's comments about the overlapping spheres of governance and highlighted a public sector reform document that his office is working on to help ensure that there is a dynamic and lean governance system in place.

**Chris Wiggan** from London Stansted Airport added that it was critical for MPs from across the region, including Essex, to champion key issues. **Neil Ward** from University of East Anglia added that a key goal of the APPG should be balanced, inclusive growth so that cities benefit rural areas. **Ruth Day** emphasised that for home grown companies such as British Sugar there is real value in bringing together the whole region.

### 3. Election of Officers

The Parliamentarians present then proceeded to conduct the election of officers to the APPG and agreed terms of reference to formally constitute the Group. The following positions were elected:

- Co-Chair: Daniel Zeichner
- Co-Chair: Peter Aldous
- Vice Chair: Lucy Frazer
- Vice Chair: Sandy Martin
- Treasurer: Jo Churchill
- Secretary: Clive Lewis

### 4. Education and Skills for the East of England

**Andrew Carter (Centre for Cities)** stated that the East of England is not a priority for the Government - although Cambridge as a city is - and asserted that the rest of the region does sufficiently well to not be deemed an urgent priority for Government. Significant needs including deprivation were masked by overall 'good enough' figures.

He went on to highlight how there is significant variation between places in the region with a quarter of the population living in urban areas and the remainder in rural areas. Economic growth does not spread easily and that improving the infrastructure was vital ensuring this happened as well as increasing the skillset of the local population. In fact, skills is the number one barrier to growth.

The region has an excellent reputation for Higher Education and in some places such as Cambridge two thirds of the population have a degree but in Ipswich it is only one in five.

He then said that the cities were in fact more exposed than smaller towns to any economic fallout from leaving the European Union. However, they were more resilient and this may bounce back quicker so overall there is a danger that it could have a depressing affect in places already having slower growth. He also said that across the region the population made of EU nationals varied from 5 to 10%.

**Mayor James Palmer** stated that 70% of the workforce in 2030 is already in employment so the challenge will be improving their skills at various points in their careers. He also highlighted the need to address the disengagement between schools and further education institutions to promote vocational qualifications and apprenticeships as viable career paths. He specifically cited OFSTED's focus on GCSE A-Cs as an example of the lack of sufficient incentives in the system for skills at Further Education level.

**Lord Heseltine** added that he supported a massive devolution of the skills agenda but there is also a need to focus on schools because currently up to 20% of those leaving school are innumerate and illiterate. It is important that local politicians take responsibility for improving these figures and not blame others. Overall the UK is 29<sup>th</sup> in the world on educational output

## 5. General Discussion

**Jo Churchill** discussed the discrepancy in funding for schools in the East of England – compared to London where MPs can now boast all schools are good or outstanding - as a significant problem. She then highlighted that the region faces a triple challenge of skills, infrastructure and connectivity that require collaborative working to deliver collective solutions. She suggested that a sub national transport body might be the required solution. She also pointed out that house prices in some areas are twelve times the average income (which is lower than the national average) and in addition in some areas 3G is awful.

**Lucy Frazer** and **Sandy Martin** both agreed that school funding is a serious issue that needs to be addressed by central government.

**Clive Lewis** highlighted that it was not just about primary and secondary education but vital that funding continued to be made available for initiatives like Sure Start centres. He agreed with earlier comments about the need for investment in infrastructure that is fit for the twenty-first century but asserted that such growth must be sustainable. Some areas as JRF have recently identified are very low for social mobility. He also added that better coordination and more robust governance would be vital pointing out that LEPs are somewhat piecemeal

**Chris Wiggan** pointed out that London Stansted Airport now has a technical college on site as it struggles to find employees and potentially there will be more than ten thousand more jobs in the next decade. **Mayor James Palmer** pointed out that if we judge schools on academic results alone then problems will persist.

**Daniel Zeichner** said he sees the APPG as a mechanism for bringing politicians together with businesses and local communities to debate key issues and make a real difference. He asked where was the discussion regards the future of Cambridge which is pulled in three directions – towards Norfolk, towards Essex and now towards Oxford too. He also pointed out that it was clear that the east of England is not paradise on earth – that it has all the problems of other places including inequality which exists in cities as well as between cities and rural areas.

**Jo Churchill** said that ultimately the group would need to agree what its asks are and she would be keen to hear the priorities of those from business and other sectors present in due course. She also said that it will be important that all universities as well as BT and Hutchison Ports are around the table.

**Daniel Zeichner** brought the meeting to a close by asserting that this first meeting was merely the beginning of the discussion and that the APPG officers would discuss a draft work programme for the year 2018 which would involve some key outputs. He also thanked Lord Heseltine, Andrew Carter and Mayor Palmer for their contributions and DevoConnect for providing the Secretariat of the Group.