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**All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Central South UK**

**Meeting held at Portcullis House**

**Wednesday March 6th 2024.**

**In attendance: Paul Holmes, MP; Alan Mak, MP; Alan Whitehead, MP; Kit Malthouse, MP; Caroline Nokes, MP; Julian Lewis, MP; Colin Banyard; Zoe Colbeck; Shannon Rockey; Gavin Hall; Gary Whittle; Nick Sutcliffe; Leigh-Sara Timberlake; Kate Pearce.**

**AGM**

Dame Caroline Dinenage, MP, is stepping down as chair of the APPG for the Central South and Paul Holmes, MP, was proposed by Alan Whitehead and seconded by Caroline Nokes, MP to become the new chair for the group.

The group agreed that Dame Caroline should be wholeheartedly thanked for her leadership and support during the first year of existence for the group.

Looking ahead Paul Holmes, MP said it was vitally important that the group fully promoted the potential for the region and that we make much of the need to attract investment to the Central South UK.

The following MPs said they would be happy to serve as officers:

Alan Whitehead, MP

Kit Malthouse, MP

Julian Lewis, MP

Bob Seely, MP

A small number of members are still required by March 31 to make the APPG constituted for another year and MPs attending said they would assist in garnering support for the group.

Julian Lewis, MP for New Forest East, suggested a Whatsapp group for members of the APPG for the Central South.

**Action: The secretariat will set up a Whatsapp group for members of the APPG for the Central South UK.**

**All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Central South UK**

**Review of 2023 and Priorities for 2024**

Leigh-Sara Timberlake, Group CEO, Business South outlined the key issues that were covered during 2023 by the APPG for the Central South.

**Housing Manifesto**

She explained that a working group derived from the Business South Housing Group has been compiling a Housing Manifesto and it will be published this Spring.

Paul Holmes, MP, said he was happy to sponsor in the launch for a reception at the House of Commons and advised it would be best to wait until the local authority elections in May have passed.

He said it was important to use the launch of the Housing Manifesto to not only promote the document but also to properly launch the APPG for the Central South. It was important to get as many MPs, Ministers and journalists along.

The meeting agreed that housing was one of the main issues for the region. Kit Malthouse, MP for North-West Hampshire, said he welcomed the opportunity for more housing around Andover.

**Action: A date towards the end of May (Mon or Tues evening) will be found and circulated upon booking.**

Leigh-Sara continued with the 2023 review and noted the group’s positive response when the issue of the Apprenticeship Levy was highlighted. A paper was presented by Zoe Huggins with support from the business voice including Carnival UK and Home Grown Hotels.

While a meeting with a Minister has yet to be agreed, Leigh-Sara said she was aware that discussions were going on behind the scenes.

And finally Energy, was discussed at the last meeting of 2023 when Alan Whitehead, MP for Southampton Test took the chair. The secretariat for the group is progressing the inclusion of the Central South in the current RESP consultation by OFGEM.

And we are looking to convene a further Round Table discussion to include PfSH, Solent Cluster and Fawley Refinery.

Looking ahead to 2024, the group agreed to revisit the 2023 topics as relevant and also to explore:

* People and Talent
* Invite HE providers in our region to a future meeting to discuss their challenges and potential solutions

**AOB**

Kate Pearce, Head of Strategy for Business South asked how matters raised by delegations attending the APPG for the Central South and supported by members could be raised elsewhere.

Paul Holmes, MP, said was possible for a Westminster Hall Debate to be held.

Julian Lewis, MP for New Forest East, said it would be good for the APPG for the Central South to have representation from as many groups in the region as possible so MPs would see the value in attending meetings.

The question of local authority involvement was also raised and the group agreed it was important for the profile and reputation of the APPG for the Central South to be such that you would not want to miss a meeting.