

## 1.5 MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

The purpose of this policy is to outline the basis of a framework for member engagement by SouthEast. This policy provides the framework for the organisation to facilitate member ownership and control.

As member-owned, member engagement is central to SouthEast. Membership is also an obligation for members. See: SouthEast Members Services Charter (covers obligations) and SouthEast Rules (covers participation)

The basis of SouthEast's approach to member engagement is AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard

(AA1000SES) (1)<sup>1</sup> which defines accountability as comprising three inter-related aspects:

1. Transparency – accounting to stakeholders.
2. Responsiveness – responding to stakeholder concerns
3. Compliance – complying with legal requirements, standards, codes, principles and policies. This policy, therefore, focuses on transparency, accountability and compliance to members of SouthEast.

SouthEast accepts the practice of inclusion – giving members the right to be heard and accepting the obligation to account to members. This necessitates:

- Identifying and understanding the social, environmental and economic performance and impacts of SouthEast's activities, products and services on members.
- Understanding the concerns of members i.e. their needs, expectations and perceptions.
- Reflecting this understanding of members in policies and practices.
- Considering and coherently responding to the concerns of members.
- Accounting to members for decisions, actions and impacts.

For member engagement to go beyond affirming rhetoric, it is necessary for SouthEast to:

- Plan a member engagement process.
- Prepare and engage members in this process.
- Respond and measure this process.

Effective engagement with members depends on resources and competencies and the engagement with members must facilitate understanding, learning and improvement.

The basis for member engagement within SouthEast will be the following:

- Membership induction
- The Annual General Meeting
- Policy Forums
- Other General Meetings called by the board and/or members.
- A SouthEast newsletter.
- A SouthEast web site.

### **AA1000 Standard**

Accountability is an international organisation committed to developing ethical accountability and sustainability reporting. The AA1000 framework is designed around stakeholder engagement which emphasises the 'how' of reporting rather than the 'what'. The AA1000 Assurance Standard, which is now globally recognised as the leading assurance standard to enable corporate, NGO and Public Sector organisations to build credibility with stakeholders and improve performance.

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