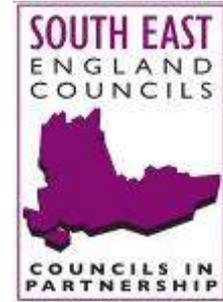


**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**



Date: 11 July 2012

Subject: **Campaign for an independent local government**

Report of: Nick Woolfenden, SEEC Head of Policy Co-ordination

**Recommendations:**

SEEC Executive members are asked to:

- i) Note proposals from the Commons Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee to formalise the relationship between central and local government.
- ii) Raise issues for the Select Committee to consider as it progresses its work.
- iii) Note the invitation for individual councils to submit responses directly to the Select Committee by 5 October 2012.

- 1.1 We are pleased to welcome Graham Allen MP (Lab), Chairman of the Commons select committee on Political and Constitutional Reform, and James Morris MP (Con), a supporter of independent local government.
- 1.2 The Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee is consulting on the democratic and practical desirability of formalising, in statute, the principles and mechanics of the relationship between central and local government. The Select Committee's Chairman has been raising awareness of how this might give local government greater autonomy.
- 1.3 The Committee is consulting on a draft code (attached as Annex to this paper), the broad aim of which is: *"Through this code Parliament recognises free and independent local councils in England accountable to local citizens. These include unitary, county, district, metropolitan district, and London borough councils. They shall enjoy independence in both powers and finance and be entitled to do all that is required at local level, within the law, to secure and improve the well-being of their citizens and communities. Parliament makes plain that within their spheres of competence, local councils have co-equal - not subordinate - status to central government and that their rights and duties shall enjoy equal protection in law."*
- 1.4 Discussions held across the country so far indicate a variety of views on the draft Code, but there has been broad local government support for specific elements including:
  - Local government financial self-sufficiency;
  - Removal of unnecessary central government supervisory/interventionist powers;
  - Ensuring it would be hard for future Parliaments to re-regulate local government.
- 1.5 The Select Committee is keen to receive general views and specific amendments to the draft code<sup>1</sup>. As well as the opportunity to raise issues at SEEC's Executive Committee, individual councils are encouraged to respond to the Select Committee's consultation by **5<sup>th</sup> October 2012**, sent to [pcrc@parliament.uk](mailto:pcrc@parliament.uk).

<sup>1</sup> The draft code plus explanatory notes are available at <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/political-and-constitutional-reform/revisecodeandnotesforWEBSITE2012amended22Feb.pdf>