

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
ALL-MEMBER MEETING**



Date: 7 February 2012

Subject: Local Government Association priorities for 2012 presented by Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman LGA.

Report by: Heather Bolton, SEEC Director

Recommendations:

Members are asked to

- i) Discuss and comment on the draft LGA business plan, priorities and budget for 2012-13
- ii) Consider proposals designed to help South East authorities collectively increase their influence on LGA activities and potential for some SEEC involvement with issues, for example self improvement.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The LGA is currently consulting on its business plan for 2012-13. SEEC emailed a copy of the plan to Leaders and Chief Executives on 20 January 2012, asking for initial comments to the LGA or via SEEC by 3 February. Under new leadership, the LGA is this year working with SEEC to ensure local authorities in the South East have the opportunity to influence the plan and comment on how well it reflects their priorities and concerns. Similar consultation is underway in other areas of the country.
- 1.2 Today's presentation by LGA Chairman Sir Merrick Cockell is an opportunity to make comments or ask questions face-to-face. A revised business plan will be presented for approval at the LGA Executive on 15 March 2012.

2. LGA business plan headlines

- 2.1 The LGA is asking for views on six emerging priorities, including suggestions on how to make the business plan more specific and clear about desired impacts. Proposed priorities and outcomes are:
 - a) **Public Service Reform** – councils are the centre, and are seen to be at the centre, of public sector reform and delivering more effective services for local people.
 - b) **Growth and Prosperity** – councils are recognised as central to economic growth.
 - c) **Funding for local government** – reform of the public sector finance system so councils raise more of their funds locally, have confidence their financing is sustainable and greater ability to co-ordinate local public services.
 - d) **Efficiency and Productivity** – councils dramatically reduce costs in ways which minimise the impact on the quality of life for their residents.
 - e) **Sector-led Improvement** – councils are the most improved part of the public sector; local politicians and senior managers lead the transformation of local places.
 - f) **The LGA's efficiency and effectiveness** – the LGA is the single voice of local government, representing every local authority across

England and Wales along with elected police and crime commissioners, operating ever more efficiently and driving down the cost of membership.

- 2.2 The full draft business plan (see Annex A) includes the LGA's outline budget of £49.7m for 2012-13. The main sources of income to fund this budget are RSG funding for England at £25.5m, member subscriptions at £10m and specific grants/ other ring-fenced funding at £8.5m.

3. South East input into the LGA

- 3.1 Discussions are ongoing between the LGA, SEEC and other sub-national local authority membership bodies on how to ensure the LGA's work reflects views of local authorities across the country.
- 3.2 SEEC Chairman Cllr Paul Carter already has seat on the LGA Executive and attends quarterly meetings of all regional chairmen. In addition, a small number of officer-led pilots are underway to improve communication and co-ordination between the LGA and other membership bodies. The aim is to ensure that "local/ regional expertise and differences can help inform and influence LGA national positions and lobbying". SEEC is not leading any of these pilots but will have the opportunity to input member concerns and learn from good practice.
- 3.3 There is also a proposal to establish basic principles of liaison and communication between the LGA and the local authority membership bodies across England. In some areas of the country there are already established close relationships with the LGA; SEEC proposes a more light touch approach in line with members' desire to continue to make an independent case for South East needs where necessary.
- 3.4 The proposed basic principles cover:
- a) Influencing local government's agenda – eg encouraging member debate and input on the LGA business plan.
 - b) Strategic input to LGA Executive and Management Team – eg including regional items at the LGA Executive and officer liaison to support this.
 - c) Programme Board Priorities – eg opportunity to contribute to programme board agendas with potential to lead a local perspective on a key issue.
 - d) Self improvement and innovation support – SEEC to consider whether it has a role in helping to encourage self regulation in the South East to prevent imposition of another unpopular top-down regime to replace the Audit Commission. It is not anticipated that SEEC would take a role in innovation support and efficiency work.
 - e) Strong shared employers' view – It is not anticipated that SEEC would have a role in this.
 - f) Sharing skills & expertise – eg potential to share policy officer expertise where relevant and where SEEC resources allow.
 - g) Local event management – eg ensure members are aware of LGA events held in the South East and provide intelligence on local concerns and issues where appropriate.