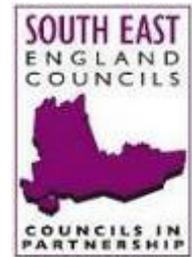


**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
ALL-MEMBER MEETING**



Date: 7 February 2013

Subject: Local Government Association business plan 2013-14

Report by: Heather Bolton, SEEC Director

Recommendation:

Members are asked to discuss and comment on initial proposals for the LGA business plan 2013-14.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The LGA is asking for SEEC member views on its 2013-14 business plan. Michael Coughlin, LGA Executive Director, will present outline proposals. This is an opportunity for SEEC members to provide input on priorities, focus and direction for the LGA's work before the business plan is finalised. The LGA's short initial business plan proposition is attached (Annex 1).

2. LGA business plan headlines

- 2.1 The LGA has set out four top priorities for 2013-14. These are very similar to the principles supported by SEEC members in discussion on last year's LGA business plan:
- a) **Economic growth, jobs & prosperity** – councils are recognised as central to economic growth.
 - b) **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 fair, and greater ability to co-ordinate local public services.
 - c) **Public Service Reform** – councils are at the centre, and are seen to be at the centre, of public service reform and delivering more effective services for local people.
 - d) **Sector-led improvement** – core services to councils, supporting local government as the most efficient, accountable part of the public sector.
- The LGA vision centres on supporting local government's ability to change lives and deliver efficient services in an accountable and reliable way.

3. Potential areas for comment

- 3.1 Building on South East views in previous years, SEEC members may wish to consider comments in three main areas suggested below.
- 3.1.1 **Priorities** – whether the LGA's four key areas (para 2.1 above) are consistent with SEEC member priorities.
- 3.1.2 **Specific work areas** – whether SEEC members want to endorse or suggest new work areas to be prioritised in the next stage of the plan. For example SEEC's own aims could be supported by LGA work on:
- Economic growth
- Infrastructure investment/ greater borrowing freedoms to allow councils to take forward projects to support growth.

- Greater devolution of powers & freedoms to support growth – eg city deal powers available to all areas.
- Concerns about the city focus in economic development – and other policy areas – which risks neglecting the potential of areas of the South East without large cities.

Funding

- More transparent and accountable funding for local government that includes clear recognition of needs in non-city areas & those areas with large populations/ significant ageing populations.
- Fair access for all areas of the country to funding streams. Particular concerns in the South East include:
 - correcting inaccurate perceptions of universal wealth in the South East
 - greater recognition of hi-tech growth in business rate retention rather than just large-footprint developments
 - correcting a funding bias that penalises two tier areas
 - ensuring fair access to EU funding.
- Greater local freedom & accountability to set council tax.
- Support for tackling the health & social care funding needs of the South East's significant ageing population.

3.1.3 **Budgets** – what budget, subscription levels and cost savings are proposed for 2013-14?

- In 2012-13 the LGA budget is £55.6m, funded by £9.8m subscriptions, £25.9m RSG, £15.7m grants and £4.2m generated income.