

## SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: 12 November 2014  
 Subject: LGA priorities and plans  
 Report of: Heather Bolton, SEEC Director



### Recommendations:

SEEC Executive members are asked to:

- i) Give a South East perspective on the LGA's current work
- ii) Highlight top priorities that South East authorities want to see included in the LGA's future programme in making the case for local government at national level

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Cllr David Sparks OBE was elected Chairman of the LGA in July 2014. He is the sixth Chairman of the LGA and the first Labour Chairman since 2004. Cllr Sparks is Leader of Dudley MBC, where he has been a councillor since 1986. He is also a member of the Labour Party's National Executive Committee. Previously, from 1977-1986 he was a member of West Midlands County Council.
- 1.2 Taking up his LGA role less than a year before the General Election, Cllr Sparks has committed to making the case to all parties for greater devolution to local authorities. He has also said he wants to ensure the LGA keeps closely in touch with its member councils to avoid being seen as 'a third estate in Whitehall'.

### 2. Current LGA priorities and challenges

- 2.1 Devolution underpins much of the LGA's current work in the lead up to the election. Key projects include supporting two Independent Commissions:
  - A joint role with CIPFA in supporting an Independent Commission on Local Government Finance, chaired by Darra Singh, a partner in EY's government & public sector team and former local authority chief executive
  - Secretariat support for an Independent Commission on Economic Growth and the Future of Public Services in Non Metropolitan England. This is chaired by Sir John Peace, Chairman of Standard Chartered Bank.
- 2.2 While the non-met commission is of interest to the South East as a largely two tier area, the need for the commission does emphasise the perception that Government's current policy approach is treating core cities and two-tier areas unequally in English local government. The perception that cities have access to greater funding and opportunities, for example via city deals, is common among more rural but economically-successful two-tier areas. A key question for the LGA is how it plans to balance the interests of both city regions and two-tier areas while still making a coherent case to Government.
- 2.3 Other areas of interest to the South East include:
  - LGA priorities and action plan on devolution for local government following the Scottish referendum.
  - 100 Days campaign. How this relates to the 'Rewiring Local Government' work that SEEC members contributed to via a series of LGA workshops in 2013.
  - Common themes between LGA work and the South East manifesto from SEEC-SESL.
  - LGA views on introducing a transparent approach to central government investment that would allocate a proportion of funding to projects that offer high financial returns to the Treasury as well as funding projects that offer social/ regeneration returns. (For example, as set out in the South East's *Mind the Gap* report).
  - LGA priorities in influencing European policy.
  - How the LGA plans to ensure closer links with member councils and how this will influence future work?
  - What are the purpose and aims of the newly-announced independent review of the LGA?