



Dear Partner....

**Giving and taking to improve the
region**

**Improvement East
The East of England's Regional
Improvement and Efficiency Partnership**

Introduction

In the recent history of local government there has been a lot of regulation, inspection and consequent grading applied to local government performance. We have had an era of extensive target setting and monitoring.

Where authorities were thought to be falling down in their responsibilities, government departments have itched to intervene and have developed a range of staff designed to support, monitor, spread best practice and urge improvements.

Following the local government White Paper, the government published the National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy (NIES) on 15 January 2008.

In short, the NIES provides a commitment to a more 'sector-led' approach to both efficiency and improvement. It urges local government to take the lead in ensuring that authority services improve. Authorities have to lead in developing Local Area Agreements. The strategy requires local government to deliver 3% efficiency gains every year. It also established Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships.

The East of England's Improvement and Efficiency Partnership, Improvement East, will build on the previous partnership charged with improvement, known as Building Capacity East and that of the Regional Centre of Excellence - East, previously the separately funded organisation supporting improvements in efficiency and productivity. The new combined partnership came together in April 2008.

The Partnership, Improvement East, comprises all the local and fire and rescue authorities in the East of England together with key national and regional agencies such as the Audit Commission, the East of England Development Agency (EEDA), the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA), the Government Office (GO East), the Improvement and

Development Agency (IDeA) and the Public Sector People Managers' Association (PPMA).

It is a sector led partnership, run by and for the local government sector – working to help authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). This document is for all of us and for LSPs.

The brief for Improvement East 2008-2011

Through the NIES along with the eight other English Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs), Improvement East has the brief to:

1. Ensure that local government services continue to improve and that identified issues are responded to
2. Assist authorities to ensure that 3% cash releasing savings are achieved in each of the three years
3. Support local economic development
4. Support improvements on local public engagement, capacity building at a local level and neighbourhood renewal
5. Support a positive approach to workforce planning
6. Support the delivery of Local Area Agreements.

In return, the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Local Government Association (LGA) have committed £5.89m (2008/09) to Improvement East with indicative funding of £15.81 for the following two years.

Improvement East has developed a Regional Improvement and Efficiency Strategy through open dialogue with all partners and LSPs, the aim being to produce a strategy which is consistent with the government's expectations whilst reflecting local needs and priorities.

The strategy was submitted to and approved by the Minister for Local Government. Annual delivery plans will also be developed. All documents can be viewed at: www.improvementeast.gov.uk

Collective Ideals

1. A Collective Purpose

The Partnership has a clear remit to deliver improvement and efficiency through every authority and LSP within the region. To achieve this, the purpose of Improvement East is to:

Coordinate, challenge, support and accelerate the drive for improvement and efficiency in localities to a higher level than would otherwise be possible.

2. Collective Priorities

Improvement East will achieve its purpose through four interrelated priorities:

- Helping to raise performance across the East of England
- Working together to transform services and deliver efficiencies
- Supporting Local Strategic Partnerships in delivering community priorities
- Developing new skills for new agendas

Importantly, our priorities are relevant to the East of England and acknowledge this region's specific issues, such as the challenges within the growth areas and local government reorganisation. They are also flexible enough to address changing circumstances such as the impact of the global financial situation.

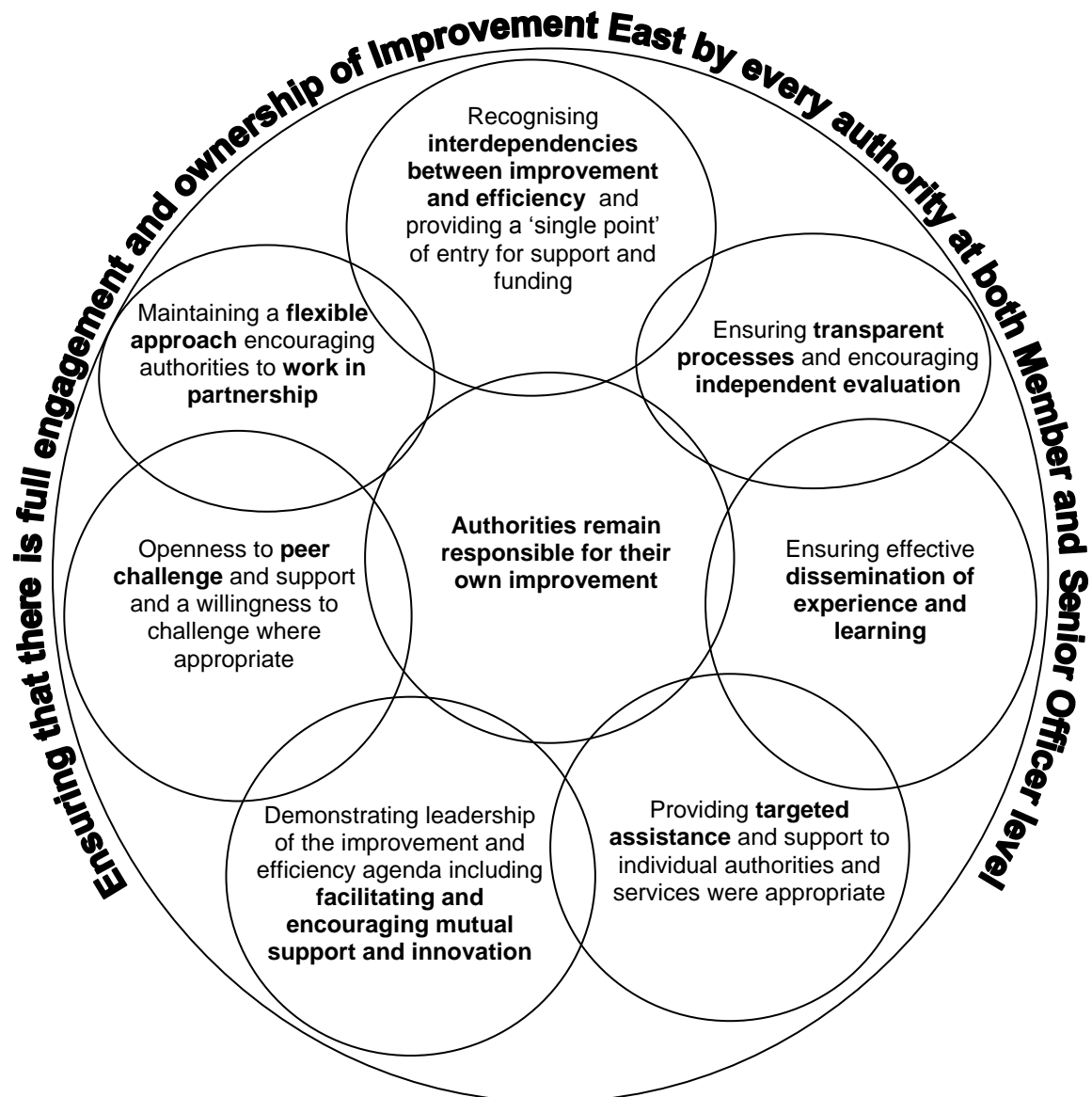
3. A Collective Means of Support

Improvement East will work with existing partnerships to develop a set of *regionally commissioned programmes* to address the priority areas identified above. These partnerships will then implement the programmes for their service or area. The Improvement East Member Panel and Executive Advisory Group will steer the process. This will ensure that the best people in

the public sector are developing programmes of work and make the maximum impact in their field.

4. A Collective Ethos

The East of England is developing a strong support culture within the local government family in the region. Improvement East wants to further engender this mutually supportive culture, building trust through promoting, supporting and facilitating peer support work, sharing good practice and encouraging partnership working. Improvement East will work to the following principles:



Healthy authorities and partnerships can recognise their strengths and challenges and welcome external insights. The *peer review* process allows the opportunity to learn from others and gives assistance from an external, but critical friend perspective.

Peer services, such as Interchange, will be facilitated and developed by Improvement East and to make this happen successfully Members and officers need to join peer support and review exercises and respond positively if they're asked to lend their expertise to others. Members and officers will gain real insights from such experiences that they and we can benefit from.

There is plenty of evidence of *collaboration* at a local level and in some sub-regions. Improvement East will try to generate even more options to collaborate within and across the region on particular issues, to reduce particular costs, or by collective procurement of shared services.

We need to challenge ourselves as to whether there might be a different way of getting our jobs done by combining with others and being prepared to invest time and effort in testing such propositions.

We need to stimulate innovation by supporting networks of Members and professionals who want to think differently about their challenges and their work. We need Members and officers to be involved in such networks. We need to share our innovative thinking.

We need to *participate in the sharing of information* which allows good performance to be spread and we need to engage with others not to compete but to share experience.

The Minimum Offer

Some authorities and LSPs may think that they can get on quite nicely without any assistance, and may also feel that they'd quite like to keep all their Members and officers focused solely on local activity.

We wouldn't be in a position to interfere with such a stance, though this would be a missed opportunity. This is a joint endeavour and we should feel that we can all take something from it by way of learning, opportunities and occasional assistance.

The minimum offer to us all is that Improvement East will:

- Support individual authorities that are performing poorly and have specific performance issues
- Support LSPs that are performing poorly and have specific performance issues
- Support specific service areas that are performing poorly and have specific performance issues
- Provide a Chief Executive mentor to any authority who wishes to have this support
- Commission projects and initiatives from the sector that will add value and make a difference
- Provide funding and Menus of Support that all authorities can access

What will success look like?

The government has made it clear that it only wants to fund this activity for another three years. At the end of that period either the activity will be discontinued, or have proved so popular with local public services that they regard its continuation as worthy of being funded from a local subscription.

Success then is that most people agree that a regional dimension to this support and challenge activity has been helpful.

But more importantly we want to be part of a continuing push to ensure that the East of England's authorities and LSPs are known as exemplars for innovation, effectiveness, efficiency, fairness and relevance to the diverse needs of our population and our visitors.

We should feel inspired to stretch for the best possible performance because we are proud of our local area and proud of the East of England.

Engaging More

Improvement East is now open for business. Please share information about the Improvement East programme with Members, officers and their local strategic partnerships.

Please visit the website for further details, up to date information on current initiatives and support that is available, how to get involved in key initiatives and key contacts.

The contact details for the Partnership's secretariat are as follows:

Improvement East

West Suffolk House

Western Way

Bury St Edmunds

Suffolk

IP33 3YU

Email: info@improvementeast.gov.uk

www.improvementeast.gov.uk