**Item 5**

**Report to Executive Advisory Group**

**Improvement East** **3rd September 2008**
**Subject: Update on Supporting the Bedfordshire Authorities**
**Report by: Secretariat**

**Purpose**

**To ratify a decision of the Member Panel in respect of funding and to update the EAG on progress with support to the Bedfordshire authorities.**

**Recommendation**

**It is recommended that the EAG:**
**i) Agrees to fund support to the Bedfordshire authorities up to £500,000**
**ii) Note the proposed support programme**

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The EAG will recall that a proposal to support the Bedfordshire authorities which are subject to LGR, was considered by the Member Panel following the Joint Meeting on 26th June 2008. A copy of the paper for that meeting is attached in Annex 1.

1.2 The Panel agreed to provide funding of £500k but also agreed that this decision should be ratified by the EAG at this meeting.

## 2. Proposed Programme of Support

2.1 In order to develop the programme of support, a further meeting has been held with representatives of the authorities the notes of which are in Annex 2.

2.2 The key areas where support is required are:

- To source and fund a "skills broker" – to liaise with the Bedfordshire authorities in respect of capacity need and with other authorities to proactively source and facilitate support. The current needs are around Adult Social Care and for closure procedures.
- To source and fund (if necessary) peer support/critical friends potentially in three dimensions - Chief Executive; members and directors.
- To source and support Member training and or mentoring particularly from existing unitary authorities.

2.3 In order to proactively assist this programme, a letter is being sent to all Chief Executives and Chief Fire Officers to encourage them to consider releasing staff to support the Bedfordshire authorities.

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# Feedback from meeting with the Bedfordshire Authorities
# Tuesday 24th June 2008

**Present**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mark Lloyd | Chief Executive Cambs County Council |
| Anne Gibson | Norfolk County Council |
| Cecilia Tredget | Director Improvement East |
| Jon Ruddick | Chief Executive South Beds Council |
| Mark Barnett | CLG on secondment to Bedford Borough Council |
| Martin Reeves | Chief Executive Beds County Council |

## 1.0 Background

At the Executive Advisory Group on the 4th June the meeting considered two bids for support from Bedford Borough Council and from Central Beds Shadow Council in order to make a recommendation to the Member Panel. The Group felt unable to make any recommendations at this stage and asked Mark Lloyd, Cecilia Tredget and Anne Gibson to meet with the authorities to discuss their particular needs and how Improvement East could offer support.

## 2.0 The four key outcomes of meeting

2.1 It was evident that there is an urgent need to get the transitional plan back on track. The timetable for transfer to unitary status is the shortest timescale in the Country as a result of an additional stage introduced by the DCLG and the hiatus caused by the Judicial Review. An injection of additional capacity will enable the three district authorities to work with the county and carry out the disaggregation of services and put in place new structures, particularly for children's and adult services.

2.2 Linked to the above there is also a need to protect high risk services from deteriorating through this transition period. It was felt that additional resources would allow Bedfordshire County Council to release capacity to support the formation of the new authorities and maintain the current services. It was apparent that Bedfordshire County has capacity issues of its own and could not offer support without taking valuable resources away from key service areas.

Capacity could be made available in a number of ways and it was felt that Improvement East had an important role to play. It could take the form of:-

- A Talent Pool drawn from the East of England. Key secondments for a short period of four to six months would build expertise and experience around the region. Improvement East could make funding available for backfilling to Councils prepared to offer secondments.
- Funding could be made available to buy in the additional capacity particularly in the areas highlighted above, children's and adult services.

2.3 A further suggestion was to evaluate the process of change while it is happening. It was felt that it would be helpful for other authorities to capture what goes well and not so well throughout the reorganisation process.

2.4 It was agreed that the above should be viewed Improvement East's first intervention. We need to continue the conversation and as the transition and transformation continues and possibly offer further support as the needs of the new unitaries and discontinuing councils change.

**3.0 Next steps**

Given the urgency surrounding paragraph 2.1 and the deadline for the new unitaries to become operational of April 2009, it is suggested that the Member Panel considers this issue before its next meeting on the 18th September. It was agreed at the last meeting of the Member Panel that urgent business could be agreed by e-mail circulation if necessary. It is also suggested that Mark Lloyd continues to represent Improvement East in discussions with the Bedfordshire authorities. To enable swift action it is suggested that a fund of up to £500k is made available to address the issues relating to reorganisation in Bedfordshire during 2008/09.

**Feedback from meeting with Bedfordshire Authorities**
**Wednesday 6th August 2008**

**Present**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mark Lloyd | Chief Executive Cambs CC |
| Jon Ruddick | Chief Executive South Beds DC |
| Mark Barnett | CLG on secondment to Bedford BC |
| Martin Reeves | Chief Executive Beds CC |
| Jane Sullivan | Assistant Director, Improvement East |

## 1. Feedback from the Improvement East Joint meeting, 26th June 2008

The joint meeting had given an "amber light" to up to £500,000 for the Bedfordshire authorities. This decision needs to be ratified at the Improvement East Member Panel on 18th September. The purpose of this funding and support is to assist with:

a) The delivery of the transition on time
b) Maintaining levels of service in respect of the county council
c) Building the two new unitary authorities
d) Spreading the learning of transition to other areas of the region

## 2. Purpose of this meeting

To agree a programme of support in accordance with the above criteria. This could begin to be implemented in advance of the meeting on 18th September.

## 3. Key Elements of a Support Programme

### 3.1 Skills

It was agreed that all authorities will require additional capacity, skills and expertise. This will vary in terms of the level, time requirement and timing but is already recognised to be essential in areas such as adult social care, children's services and business process transformation.

*Proposed Improvement East Support*

a) Source and fund a "skills broker" – to liaise with the Bedfordshire authorities in respect of need and with other authorities to proactively source and facilitate support. This would be an on-going role but not necessarily a full time role.
b) Proactively approach Chief Executives and Leaders across the region to gain their support and commitment to releasing staff to assist the Bedfordshire authorities on a full or part-time or ad hoc basis.
c) Fund the backfill posts for those authorities supplying staff
d) Enabling/encouraging the use of Improvement East's 'Interchange' when appropriate

### 3.2 Learning

It was agreed that this element of support should cover both learning for other authorities across the region but also for the Bedfordshire authorities as they go through the transition process. The aim of this support would therefore be to capture learning in a structured way but would also include challenging proposed courses of action, behaviours etc.

*Proposed Improvement East Support*

a) Source and fund (if necessary) peer support/critical friends potentially in three dimensions - Chief Executive; members and directors. This would be for 1 day a month for each dimension.
b) Further explore the use of the interactive learning resource from Learning Pool; facilitate and fund if applicable

### 3.3 Member Development

It was recognised that members of the new unitary authorities will need to develop skills both in terms of new/transformed service areas but also of new/emerging agendas.

*Proposed Improvement East Support*

Source and support training and or mentoring particularly from existing unitary authorities.

### 3.4 Adult Social Care

Beds CC has recognised that there is a risk to adult social care service levels as the service and staff are disaggregated to the unitary authorities. This is particularly the case now that the Director is leaving the authority.

*Proposed Improvement East Support*

In addition to the Skills support detailed above, be an additional recruitment channel for the authority

### 3.5 Senior Staff Support

It was recognised that support may be required for senior staff, in addition to the practical support that Beds CC is leading.

*Proposed Improvement East Support*

Source mentors if required for senior staff

### 3.6 Closure of Authorities

Three authorities will be closing down and, in particular, technical support such as legal and financial services is required to undertake this. This element of work could distract from the transition and development work for the two new unitary authorities. It was recognised that this could be a discrete area of work which could be of value to other authorities in the region in the future.

*Proposed Improvement East Support*

Source and fund support as part of the Skills support detailed above.

## 4. Management of the Support Programme

It is proposed that Improvement East commission these areas of work and thereby undertake the financial management of the programme. This would minimise any additional work for the Bedfordshire authorities.

However, it is recognised that some areas, such as the Learning support proposed, will require input from the authorities in terms of agreeing the individuals who are undertaking this, potentially, sensitive piece of work.

Improvement East would continue to assist with the development of any further support work required and would monitor the implementation of and impact of the support programme. This would continue via Improvement East's Secretariat with oversight from Mark Lloyd and reporting to Improvement East Board as appropriate.