Improvement East

Minutes of the Executive Advisory Group Meeting
Held on 3 September 2008 at the Trinity Centre, Cambridge

Present:

Andrea Hill (Chair)	Chief Executive Suffolk County Council
John Campbell (V. Chair)	Chief Executive North Herts District Council
Cllr Penny Otton*	Member - Regional Improvement and Efficiency Panel
Gillian Beasley	Chief Executive Peterborough City Council
Rob Hammond	Chief Executive, Cambridge City Council
Mark Lloyd	Chief Executive, Cambridgeshire County Council
Malcolm Morley	Chief Executive, Harlow Council
David White	Chief Executive, Norfolk County Council
Andrew Good	Chief Executive, Mid-Suffolk District Council
Joanna Killian	Chief Executive, Essex County Council
Rob Tinlin	Chief Executive, Southend Borough Council
Caroline Tapster	Chief Executive, Hertfordshire County Council
Anne Gibson	PPMA
Dennis Skinner	IDeA
Andrew Limb	GO-East
Mike Mosley	EERA
Andy Perrin	Audit Commission
Cecilia Tredget	Director, Improvement East

***** Substitute

In Attendance:

Observer:

Liz Hume	Cambridgeshire County Council

1. Introductions and Apologies

Andrea Hill had been unavoidably delayed, Vice Chairman, John Campbell took the Chair pending her arrival.

Introductions were made. Liz Hume was introduced as shadowing Andrew Limb and attending this meeting as an observer.

Apologies were received from:

Angie Ridgwell, Thurrock Council; Cllr Richard Stay, Chairman RIEP
Richard Elliot, Norfolk Fire Service; Martin Reeves, Bedfordshire CC
Jon Ruddick South Bedfordshire DC; Kevin Crompton Luton Borough Council
Deborah Cadman EEDA; Geoff Rivers South Norfolk DC

2. Minutes of the EAG meeting of 4 June 2008

The Minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

Matters arising:

(i) Page 3 – 2 (iv) Secondments to Improvement East:
4 positive responses had been received.

(ii) Page 3 – Waveney DC
Gillian updated the meeting. Some positive progress had been made and a further meeting was planned to take place shortly.

It was agreed that Gillian would provide a full written report to the next meeting.

To be tabled at the meeting

(iii) Page 4 – Bedfordshire Local government Re-organisation.
David White expressed concern that Improvement East monies were to be used to fund salary costs. He felt that these costs should have been included in the original Bid. Agreed to discuss further under Item 5. David offered to give personal time to mentoring if required.

Andrea Hill took over the Chair.

3. Delivery Plan – Feedback from Cluster Groups

Performance Cluster

Caroline presented the report on progress in the Performance Cluster.

The following comments were received:

- Adult Care – if £300k agreed, the option of the JIP requesting the remaining £100k at a future date should remain available.

- With regard to improving Adult's and Children's Services, the region should aim to be comparable with the average regional performance across the country.

- Need to ensure authorities do not get to the position of DCSF intervention. Therefore need to be proactive and identify where the areas of poor performance are.

- Top priorities differed from authority to authority where 14-19 age group was more important to some but commissioning the top priority for others.

- Support/guidance on working with the NHS and PCTs would be helpful

It was agreed that:

(i) The bid from Dacorum for £190,00 should be approved subject to conditions a) and b) set out in the report under 2.8.3.

(ii) The bid from EERA for £36,400 for a programme of work to support authorities with the new Equalities Framework should be approved.

(iv) That £300,000 be approved for the proposals in respect of Adult Social Care. It was also agreed that a further request for £100,000 could be considered at a later date, subject to availability of funds.

(v) The proposals outlined in paragraph 2.11 Children's Services should be supported subject to the amendment to include firm proposals on performance issues.

(vi) The Performance Cluster should be given authority to develop and a menu of support for launch at the IE event on 27 October.

This has been launched and is included in the report of the Performance Cluster

LAA Cluster

Gillian reported on the LAA Cluster which had been disbanded following its first meeting in place of the new support structure being set up.

A report developing the new support structure was in the process of being prepared, it had been hoped to have it ready for today's meeting but required some further work.

It was agreed that the finished paper should be circulated to the Group for comments prior to submission to the Member Panel of the 18th September.

This was overtaken by events and a report updating the meeting on progress is included in the report on supporting LAAs

Efficiency Cluster

Malcolm reported on the work of the Efficiency Cluster. In addition the meeting discussed the role descriptions for the Lead Member and Chief Executive Champions which could be adopted by all the Cluster groups.

It was noted that efficiency should be part of the remit for all the groups and that the biggest spend areas should be targeted (adults and children's services).

The draft role descriptions for the Member and Chief Executive Champions were agreed.

They were also agreed by the Member Panel on 18 September 2008

Skills and Capacity

Cecilia presented a report on Skills and Capacity. Six key work areas had been identified:

Workforce Planning

It was noted that the proposed network for Culture and Sport would be based on a partnership of existing agencies (eg Sport England, MLA) plus local authority representation.

It was agreed that:

(i) Improvement East should support the network of the Heads of HR across the region in the development of a programme for 2009.

(ii) Improvement East should support the setting up of a regional improvement network for Culture and Sport to the sum of £15,000 in 2008.

Member Development

It was observed that Members attending the Member Development Network and the RIE Member Panel tend to be the same people resulting in a lack of a broad dissemination of information.

Community Empowerment:

- There is an acknowledged lack of skills and capacity at both officer and member level.
- Need to be in a position to influence spending of the Regional Empowerment Partnership. However, very little was known about who they were and what they did.

It was agreed that the secretariat would produce a briefing paper on the Regional Empowerment Partnership and circulate it with the Minutes.

This has been circulated. We will discuss this at a future meeting

Economic Development

A Chief Executive Champion was being sought to take forward work in this area.

Growth

It was agreed to retrospectively approve £50,000 for Thurrock Council to develop a capacity building project for building control services.

Andrea to ask Dennis if he has spoken to acting CEO of Thurrock

Unitaries

There was general agreement that Improvement East should support authorities in this period of change,

It was noted that Climate Change had not been identified as an area for support and it needed to be brought more to the fore.

4, "Making a Difference" – the two or three big things where we can make a difference.

The Group received the report and the following points were raised:

- There was a difference between:

  - What CLG will expect RIEPs to deliver on in Year 1 – Efficiency and LAAs
  - Where the biggest impact would be – Adults and Children's Services
  - What is distinctive about this region and makes it stand out from others – Growth and LGR.
  - What was essential to the region - Performance

- Growth and LGR should be on a longer term agenda.

It was agreed that the secretariat would reshape this paper to reflect the above comments.

i. This was reshaped and taken to the Member Panel on 18 September where it was agreed Copy of report to be tabled

ii. Do people want to see copies of Member Panel Report and Minutes in future?

5. Update on Support to the Bedfordshire Authorities

Mark presented the update report.

Concern was expressed that by giving this support, the true costs of the process were being hidden. There was concern that the true costings, especially around staffing issues were not included in the original bids.

5 responses to the request for help had been received to date.

It was agreed that:

(i) EAG should fund support to the Bedfordshire authorities up to £500,000

(ii) The Chair should take the Group's concerns around costing to CLG via the Chief Executives Task Group.

6. Update from partner Agencies

Audit Commission

Andy reported that:

- Consultation papers for CAA were published at end of July with the Use of Resources consultation running alongside that.
- Audit Commission were talking to individual bodies and LSPs to promote more understanding around CAA.
- All CPAs would be concluded by end of March 09.

An opinion was expressed that following introduction of CAA, the inspection burden on local authorities would be heavier rather than lighter owing to the reluctance of other public bodies to rely on CAA and review the necessity of carrying out their own inspections. Andy recognised the problem and said that the Audit Commission were doing everything possible to get the message across.

GO-East

- Regional economic statement issued last year. Moving towards regional funding.
- Guidance published "Roles and Responsibilities in the Local Performance Framework". Andrew to provide link to send out with the Minutes.
- New director had been appointed and would start November/December..

IDeA

- A report on the LGA Development Strategy was being presented to the LGA Executives on 11 September. The amalgamation of various bodies including IDeA and LACORS into one specific body was likely to go forward although timescales were unsure.
- LGA and the Improvement and Efficiency Advisory Network were involved in setting up national and regional architecture with a view to identifying a shared number of priorities.
- Cllr Richard Stay had been invited to join the LGA's Improvement Board.

EERA

Mike would send round a list of forthcoming events.

7. Any Other Business

Developing in Partnership from Strategy to Practicality – Joint GO/IE Event 27 October 2008

Plans were well advanced for this event. 160 delegates had booked so far. Cecilia requested volunteers for a speaker to introduce Improvement East. Members of the group were asked to contact Cecilia if they wished to volunteer.

Dates and times of future meetings:

12 November 2008 - EAG meeting - Holiday Inn, Bridge Road, Impington 2.30 pm