

Improvement East

Minutes of the Executive Advisory Group Meeting Held on 03 November 2009 at the Trinity Centre, Cambridge

Present:

John Campbell (Chair)	Chief Executive, North Hertfordshire District Council
Cllr Richard Stay	Chairman, Member Panel
Caroline Tapster	Chief Executive Hertfordshire County Council
Phil Simpkins	Chief Executive, Bedford Borough Council
Trevor Holden	Chief Executive, Breckland District Council
Andy Fry	Chief Fire Officer, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service
Andy Perrin	Audit Commission
Dennis Skinner	IDeA
Tim Mills *	GO-East
Neil Hayes*	EEDA
Karen Livingstone	Strategic Health Authority
Cecilia Tredget	Director, Improvement East
Jane Sullivan	Assistant Director, Improvement East
David Ellis	Assistant Director, Improvement East
Michelle Nuttall	Senior Programme Manager, Improvement East
Ricky Fuller	Programme Manager, Improvement East
Helen Gregorios-Pippas	Communications Manager, Improvement East
* Substitute	

Apologies were received from:

Andrea Hill (Chair) – Suffolk County Council
Deborah Cadman, EEDA (Neil Hayes substituting)
Andrew Limb Go-East (Tim Mills substituting)
Bob Coomber, Interim Chief Executive, Thurrock Council
Gillian Beasley – Peterborough City Council
Richard Carr – Central Bedfordshire
Mark Lloyd – Cambridgeshire County Council
Joanna Killian/Nick Bell – Essex County Council
David White – Norfolk County Council
Kevin Crompton, Luton Borough Council
Rob Tinlin – Southend Borough Council
Malcolm Morley – Harlow Council
Andrew Good – Mid Suffolk District Council
Brian Stewart – EERA
Anne Gibson - PPMA

1. Introductions and Apologies

John Campbell (vice Chair) chaired the meeting. Introductions were made around the table. He welcomed Karen Livingstone, Director of Partnerships from the East of England Strategic Health Authority to the meeting.

John explained that the agenda had been structured as last time with two sections, the first covering items for discussion and decision and the second section items for information only.

2. Minutes of the Executive Advisory Group Meeting of 15 July 2009

The Minutes were approved as an accurate record and there were no matters arising.

3. Improvement East post 2011 including discussion on Health – Karen Livingstone, Strategic Health Authority

3.1 Improvement East Post 2011

Cecilia presented the report which set out guiding principles to be agreed which could form the basis of a model for sector led improvement and efficiency in the east post 2011.

Cecilia pointed out that parallel work on improvement and efficiency was ongoing in other agencies such as Police and Health and that Karen Livingstone had been invited to the meeting today to inform the Group on what was happening in the health sector.

The East of England Strategic Authorities Leaders Board (EESAL) would be considering improvement and efficiency in the region post 2011 at their meeting in December and this report would form the basis of the paper being submitted to them for discussion.

The funding issue was discussed. Members of the group felt that it would be better to build a partnership around minimal or no subscription in order to encourage the greatest participation. One way to achieve that would be ensure funds were recycled. Cecilia reported that Improvement East did have an Invest to Save scheme in place aimed at recycling funds. There had, however, been no take up on this offer to date.

The possibility of the government clawing back any underspend was raised. Cecilia said that there had been no precedent to date of funding already received being clawed back in this way. Dennis agreed that the likelihood of clawback was low, but pointed out that it was still possible that Year 3 funding would not be as high as anticipated, although work was going on behind the scenes to try and ensure this did not happen.

In conclusion, it was felt that the paper would be strengthened by:

- Emphasising the importance of all public sector partners working together in the future on improvement and efficiency.
- Placing emphasis on providing excellence in public services.
- Having an alternative plan against the event that the government clawed back the possible underspend.

AGREED: The guiding principles were agreed subject to the above notes.

3.2 Discussion on Health

Karen Livingstone, told the group that the health community had been trying to improve services by directing most support to poor performing PCTs but were now trying to move towards placing greater focus on achieving excellence. She said that they would be very keen to participate in a pan-sector improvement and efficiency partnership.

Aided by the use of a handout, Karen outlined the current position within the Health Service and the problems they would be facing in the future in trying to provide more and better quality services with less funding. A trajectory of anticipated spend over the next five years had been produced which showed that, if funding continued at its present rate, a £1.6 - £2.0 shortfall was predicted.

Karen said that demand management was a real challenge for the health service and they needed to work more closely with partners in facing that challenge.

Richard commented that the Total Place initiative had identified the health service, along with the Department of Work and Pensions as being the biggest spenders in his region and that better co-operation and sharing of services was vital.

Karen said that her job was to develop partnerships and that the East of England SHA was the only health authority in England to have someone in this role. Her remit was to ensure engagement with partners in the region.

In discussing next steps, Cecilia said that she was optimistic that proposals on social care and working together would evolve from the Total Place projects.

Karen mentioned an event which was being held on 17th November which involved a large number of clinicians and decision makers from the health authority. Karen was asked to feed thoughts and suggestions from this meeting into that event in order to get a feeling of the appetite for more partnership working within the sector.

Cecilia said that Karen (or one of her colleagues) would become a member of EAG and attend future meetings. Similar representation was being sought from the Police, although this was more difficult as there is no regional body set up for Police.

Andy suggested talking to other RIEPs to find out what was happening in their regions.

ACTION: Secretariat to have conversations with other RIEPS about partnership working with local health authorities.

4. Sharpening the Focus – Year Three Delivery Plan

4.1 Proposal to move from four clusters to three clusters

Cecilia stated that there was a need to sharpen the focus on where we target resources. She proposed continuing the prioritisation of work around performance and efficiency. With regard to the other two themes LAA/LSPs and Skills and Capacity, the world had moved on since these themes had been agreed and we now needed to take account of the recession and a possible future funding crisis.

It was therefore proposed to wind down those two clusters and replace with a “Leadership of Place “ cluster. This would pick up some work from the other two cluster and adopt a new focus around Total Place and Leadership of Place. The cluster would also continue to support work around member development and leadership, work on economic development and the building of capacity within local authorities to support communities through the recession to make them more efficient and effective.

Tim asked for reassurance that Improvement East would continue to support LAAs and CAA . Cecilia confirmed that the CAA element would be picked up by the Performance Cluster and LAAs would fit in to Leadership of Place.

4.2 Discussion on CAA

Jane said that up to now the Performance Cluster had based criteria for support to individual authorities around CPA and Use of Resources scores. With the changes brought in by the new CAA regime it was time to consider revising the principles of support for individual authorities in the region in order to establish a programme to support the right authorities in the right way.

Andy reported that the picture emerging from CAA for this region was generally good with very few red flags. He said the Audit Commission would be drawing together a picture of areas that required support, this would then give a better idea of where to focus that support.

Caroline felt that the it would be unwise to base support simply on red flags as there were many other indicators that should be considered. She stressed the importance of offering assistance early on before authorities got into difficulties. She also emphasised the importance of identifying what was excellent in the region and spreading that good practice.

Richard queried the role of Members within the CAA process and wanted to know how the system operated in the East. He was unsure which Members sat on the Member Panels and how they had been allocated. Cecilia agreed to find out more information about the Panels and how they worked.

ACTION: Secretariat to research into role of Members within the CAA process, particularly with regard to how this worked in the East, which Members were involved and how they had been allocated.

4.3 Issues raised by the performance peer support group.

Jane explained that the Chief Executive leads supporting individual authorities had set up a mentoring group to help each other and share expertise.

The last meeting had discussed issues around looking at the criteria for individual authorities and whether this should be broadened to cover support for individual services as well as corporate support. The meeting had also discussed developing mechanisms to review whether support was effective and define at which stage it would be appropriate to step back. The paper at appendix 2 outlined suggestions such as considering whether an Improvement Board was necessary in every case and setting up review meetings.

The report and suggestions were noted by the group.

4.4 Peer Support Framework

The IDeA publication “Nowhere Left Behind” had been discussed by EAG In April this year. EAG had requested the secretariat to work on a model for the East of England.

This had been devised and Jane had recently circulated to all Chief Executive members of EAG, together with an indication of authorities to be paired with.

Responses received had raised several questions, eg:

- Was the Chief Executive’s job to support or challenge?
- Was the Chief Fire Officer’s role all the same or were they different in combined fire authorities?
- What was the mechanism for allocating Chief Executive peers – should District Chief Executives only be allocated to District Councils etc.?
- Should Chief Executive Peers be accredited?
- Should authorities be invited to opt in rather than impose a system.

Cecilia suggested that the role should be more about engagement with Improvement East with an element of challenge. The Chief Executive peers should adopt an ambassadorial role promoting Improvement East and the help that was available from us.

Cecilia stated that the original report had been about local government moving towards a framework for self regulation.

Dennis thought that it could be used to spot problems in local authorities before they became acute and to fill the space if inspection and monitoring was cut by a future government.

Andy Fry explained that there was a difference between Chief Fire Officers. Where a County Council was the local Fire Authority Chief Fire Officers were Directors of the Council; in combined Fire Authorities the Chief Fire Officer was also the Chief Executive of that Fire Authority.

Phil asked if Chief Executives could be provided with an information pack on their allocated authorities by Improvement East before contact was made. Cecilia agreed that the secretariat would provide any support needed to Chief Executives on demand.

John felt it was important that Chief Executives should first make personal contact with their allocated authorities rather than a general letter being sent from Improvement East.

AGREED: It was agreed that the secretariat should send out further information clarifying the role of the Chief Executive peers as focusing on engagement and to indicate that support from Improvement East would be available to them.

ACTION: Secretariat to issue further clarification to Chief Executives as above.

4.5 Progress on the Total Place/Leadership of Place initiatives in the region.

Cecilia reminded the group of Improvement East's Total Place event taking place on 26 November at the Genome Centre in Cambridgeshire.

Handouts from a Powerpoint presentation were distributed to the group and Cecilia gave an update on progress to date. She said that results from this project would be used to identify potential areas of work for Improvement East. It was intended to utilise funding from the LAA/LSP cluster to provide the opportunity to all authorities in the region to undertake the Total Place process. A review of the programme's achievements would be conducted by the end of March 2010 to help inform the Year 3 Delivery Plan.

The meeting requested that the original Powerpoint presentation be circulated with the Minutes. It was pointed out that the map on page 1 of the presentation still referred to Bedfordshire County Council.

ACTION: Powerpoint presentation to be circulated with the Minutes. The map on page 1 of the presentation to be replaced with an up-to-date map.

Trevor informed the group of the Total Place work which was ongoing in Norfolk. This initiative had led people to recognise that cross-boundary working was possible. The Norfolk LGA Chief Executives group had been disbanded and a Public Sector Leaders Board had been formed where Chief Officers and Members met together. The LEAPP project was about ensuring that projects and plans were turned into real deliverables. The challenge now was to keep the momentum going to make sure that they continue to grow.

5. Quarterly Progress Report

This item was for information only.

6. Update from Partner Agencies

6.1 IDeA

Dennis said that the LGA had commissioned a report "Freedom to Lead" initiating a debate around how councils and their partners can be given greater freedom to respond to local priorities and introducing a new kind of accountability framework.

6.2 Audit Commission

Andy informed the group that a Chief Executives meeting was being held on 3 December which would be discussing CAAs.

6.3 Go-East

Tim reported on a Total Place event which had been staged by Go-East. Notes had been circulated and actions were being followed up with Government to enable conversations between Government and local partnerships to continue.

They were also continuing to work with Improvement East and the Audit Commission on CAA.

6.4 EEDA

Neil reported that EEDA were being subjected to a supplementary review by the NAO who wanted to know what RDAs were doing about the recession. There was no reference to Total Place. The assessment meeting was due to take place in November with an on site inspection around February.

7. Any Other Business

Cecilia informed the group that Improvement East would be moving from Flempton into West Suffolk House in Bury St Edmunds at the beginning of the New Year.

Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting would take place on 24th February 2010, starting at 9.00 am. This would be a joint meeting with the Member Panel.