

## Improvement East

### Notes from the Joint Member Panel and Executive Advisory Group Meeting Held on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2010 At the Trinity Centre, Cambridge CB4 0FN

#### Present

Cllr Richard Stay – Chairman RIEP	Central Bedfordshire Council
Cllr Chris Arnold	Colchester Borough Council
Cllr Derrick Ashley	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Mike Carver	East Hertfordshire Council
Cllr Gavin Elsey	Peterborough City Council
Cllr Richard Henry	Stevenage Borough Council
Cllr Theresa Higgins	Colchester Borough Council
Cllr Terry Hone	North Hertfordshire District Council
Cllr Michael Lager	Braintree District Council
Cllr Mac McGuire	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr Chris Millington	Harlow District Council
Cllr Penny Otton	Mid-Suffolk District Council
David Burnip	Forest Heath District Council
Andy Fry	Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service
Anne Gibson	PPMA
Andrew Limb	GO-East
Malcolm Morley	Harlow District Council
Andy Perrin	Audit Commission
Phil Simpkins	Bedford Borough Council
Dennis Skinner	IDeA
Brian Stewart	East of England Regional Assembly
Caroline Tapster	Hertfordshire County Council
Rob Tinlin	Southend on Sea Borough Council
Cecilia Tredget	Improvement East
Jane Sullivan	Improvement East
David Ellis	Improvement East
Elizabeth Forbes	Clare Consulting
Joe Simpson	Leadership Centre

#### 1. Welcome and Introductions – Cllr Richard Stay

Cllr Stay welcomed everyone to the meeting and especially Cllr Richard Henry from Stevenage who was attending his first meeting of the Panel. He went on to outline the programme for the morning and introduced Elizabeth Forbes who would be facilitating the workshops.

#### 2. Freedom to lead : trust to deliver – Dennis Skinner

Dennis introduced the LGA's "Freedom to lead : trust to deliver" consultation paper and explained that this document contained proposals for a new accountability

framework for localities and what that might look like. Dennis encouraged everyone to take the document away and read it. Closing date for responses was 10<sup>th</sup> March.

### **3. Looking forward – what is the role for Improvement and Efficiency in the East of England post 2011? – Table group discussions.**

Following table group discussions on a set of four questions around this theme, the following comments were noted:

*Question 1: What is the role for Improvement East or its successor in the East of England post 2011?*

- To lead collaboration
- To be an honest broker in projects
- Act as catalyst for partnerships across the political divide and across the whole government sector
- It needs support by central government
- Should sustain current work
- Move towards the Total Place picture.

*Question 2: How do we engage other Improvement and Efficiency bodies across the public sector?*

- First need to define who those other bodies are.
- Need to be pro-active – offer a prospectus
- Local government should take the lead
- Some public sector providers are increasingly aware of lack of democratic legitimacy/accountability in some areas of public provision.
- Should be sensitive to differences across the region – need quantum/size to be effective. One size doesn't fit all.
- Need to focus on improvements which benefit customers. Improvement to services is not necessarily improvement to consumer.
- Would match policy on pooled funding.

*Question 3: What would the governance look like?*

- Relationship between Members and Officers would be different within the Total Place concept.
- Councillors would be seen as community leaders – but this is a big step from where we are now – complex issues for member-led governance.
- Local Government may need to be more trusting of other agencies.

*Question 4: Where would funding be sourced?*

- Funding for RIEPs could be seen as an easy target for future government cuts.
- Depending on the shape/role of the organisation in the future, other funding sources may become available eg:
  - Fee based or subscription based – services would need to be marketed

- Utilise current uncommitted funding to generate income.
- If IE is valued by the sector, the sector should be prepared to pay for it.
- Need to argue the case for funding with central government. They would save money if the sector adopted a more self-regulating role at a regional level.

#### 4. A sharper focus : priorities for Year Three – Cecilia Tredget

Cecilia began by thanking everyone for their support during the year with special thanks to EERA for all their help up to now. She went on to explain that the recently circulated Highlight Report would be turned into a full Annual Report for the end of the year. It was estimated that by the end of the year £10m of efficiency savings would be credited to Improvement East projects in the region, rising to £30m next year and this figure would keep rising.

**Efficiency:** The key priorities for Year 3 were intelligent procurement; collaboration and transformation. Cecilia outlined some of the current efficiency programmes. She told the meeting that all 9 RIEPs worked well together and shared good ideas/practice .

**Performance:** The priority was to continue in those areas that we were seen as leading on, eg supporting authorities in the region.

Self regulation through increased engagement would become a priority next year which would be tackled through a programme of Chief Executive engagement with each authority in the region.

The key services including adult social care and children’s services would be the third priority.

Cecilia stressed that the three clusters would not work as silos and that there would be strong links/ crossovers between all the clusters.

**Leadership of Place:** Cecilia said that Total Place/Leadership of Place was not a quick fix but a long term programme. Work to date had created opportunities for discussion between authorities in Norfolk and Suffolk and the Cambridgeshire project had learned a great deal from the Norfolk programme. Increased collaboration was needed at both a local authority and pan-government sector level. Total Place had shown that we need to do more to add value to provide support to all the leaders in the East of England.

**Budget:** Cecilia outlined the draft budget for the Year Three Delivery plan based on the assumption that Government funding of £7m would be forthcoming. Together with a carry forward amount of approx £6m the budget would total around £13m. It was proposed to fund the Clusters as follows:

- Performance £3.5m
- Efficiency £5m
- Leadership of Place £3.5m

**Governance:** It had been agreed that the Member Panel would become a Panel of the East of England LGA from 1 April 2010. The secretariat had moved to West Suffolk House in December and staff would transfer to Suffolk County Council on a TUPE type transfer also from 1<sup>st</sup> April. Suffolk County Council would become the Accountable Body for Improvement East.

## **5. Discussion to review priorities for 2010-11 and how to achieve them – Table group discussion**

Following table group discussions on this theme around a set of three questions, the following comments were noted:

*Question 1: What three things would you most like to see improved in 2010-11?*

- Examples of cross-sector improvement eg adult services
- Concrete savings examples
- Building more social capital – new projects. (Social capital: shifting resources in to communities to build networks to help communities take better care of themselves)

*Question 2: Have the right priorities been identified for 2010-11?*

- Most work on efficiency involved transforming the way things were done and should therefore be classed as transformation.
- Don't lose sight of economic development under total place banner.
- Focus on improvements for people not organisations
- Need to see outcomes for leadership of place work
- Foster/lead collaboration with other agencies such as health and the aging agenda
- Help councils to make difficult decisions and take risks eg staff reductions
- Provide skills training
- Risk management
- Moving forward into less regulation and with less indicators we would need to ensure that we can still identify struggling/poor performing councils

*Question 3: Does the proposed budget allocation set out in the delivery plan give the right balance across the clusters?*

- The budget should be driven by the priorities which should be driven by the needs of the local authority community. Need a flexible budget to cope with this.
- IE should consider taking a more pro-active role and pointing authorities to where efficiencies could be made.
- The budget as set out was fine for accounting purposes at the present time but a flexible approach was needed to allow for priority changes at a later stage
- To establish our legitimacy for 2011 onwards we need to be sure we are doing what authorities would like us to do
- Need to be seen to make a difference to the people that the Members represent to make people's lives better.

## **6. Leadership East: a leadership programme for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – Joe Simpson, Leadership Centre**

Joe Simpson summed up the main focus of a series of conversations which he had been having with Improvement East and EELGA as “how to get on the front foot for the coming challenges”. He said that we had reached a window of opportunity for change but that window was limited in terms of time and geography. The aim was to put the East of England at the front of the change process and to develop a strategy deliverable within this calendar year. This would consist of three elements: regional conversation; sub-regional work and à la carte delivery. The role of the Leadership Centre/Improvement East was to be a neutral space, act as critical friend, bring in the best to advance and challenge ideas and approaches and to champion emerging practice to external audiences.

Comments following Joe’s presentation were as follows:

- The east was a very disparate region whilst being politically very stable.
- Communities did not always fit into sub-regions defined by government.
- Politicians will not want to do anything pre-election, but scoping work could still be carried out in the interim, starting the regional conversation post election and phase 2 in the autumn.

Cecilia said that this programme will be discussed at the leadership of place cluster. The Member Panel and EAG would want input and it would then be taken to the LGA for further discussion.

## **7. Sum up and next steps**

Cecilia thanked all attendees for their contributions. She summed up the findings of the meeting as accepting the priorities of the Delivery Plan bearing in mind the need to work with the Clusters to make sure we are commissioning what the sector wants. We need to bring the pan-sector work to the table and also need to demonstrate how much we are saving through efficiency projects. The original Regional Improvement and Efficiency Strategy is now outdated and we must go out to the wider public sector to find out what they need to take a pan-sector partnership forward.

Richard made the point that this was the last meeting under the EERA banner. He felt Members had put in a lot of work over the last two years and he wanted to record his thanks to Members for the work they had done.

In his position as Chairman of the Member Panel, he had attended EAG meetings which had given him an insight into the way the regional Chief Executives body operated. He also thanked staff at Improvement East for their sterling efforts. Although still a small group, it had grown considerably over the last two years.

Richard commented that the East was, to a degree, an artificial region and we need to provide opportunities to have conversations about how we go forward together. He felt IE had made its mark at national LGA and RIEP level and had supported programmes we could be proud of.

