



Improvement East

Highlight Report

January 2010

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Foreword

This is our second year as the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP) for the East of England and we are really starting to make progress. We delivered well in year one and in year two we have pushed to accelerate this delivery and secure real progress against the region's priorities.

From the outset we have always said that we should be quick to respond to the needs of the 58 authorities across our region and the wider challenges they face. In this past year we have successfully demonstrated we can do this and the emphasis has been on helping authorities to prepare for the challenge of sweeping public sector cuts ahead and develop the sector's capacity to support communities throughout the recession.

In order to help councils we have supported over 60 per cent of our authorities in 'Total Place' and Leadership of Place initiatives across the region. These authorities are now better placed to face the challenges ahead and have already taken steps to collaborate not just with each other but across the public sector.

Our efficiency programme is making an impact and has already helped save £11 million across the region. This growing work, when extended by our new workstreams and further engagement which should follow on from our Leadership of Place initiatives will help the region's authorities save up to £100 million by 2014.

The East of England region is one of the most significant contributors to the wealth of the country and it is important that we support our authorities to help their economies throughout the recession. We are actively building the capacity of our partners and working across the public sector to ensure our region retains its economic strength.

We still have a great deal to do and must not be complacent. We will continue our sector led approach to improve the performance of struggling authorities and enable our partners to become more efficient in year three of our programme.

"I can see the difference that Total Place is making to my council and how it has galvanised us to work differently and collaborate with partners in a new way. The support that Improvement East is giving to all the authorities in the region will mean that they are more efficient and better prepared for the challenges ahead" **Cllr Richard Stay, Chairman, Improvement East and Deputy Leader, Central Bedfordshire Council**

"One of Improvement East's strengths is the way it helps deliver sector led support across the region. By supporting councils and by utilising the skills and experience of the sector we have seen real progress in authorities that were struggling at the start of the year." **Andrea Hill, Chair, Improvement East Executive Advisory Group and Chief Executive, Suffolk County Council**



Cllr Richard Stay

Chairman, Improvement East and Deputy Leader,
Central Bedfordshire Council



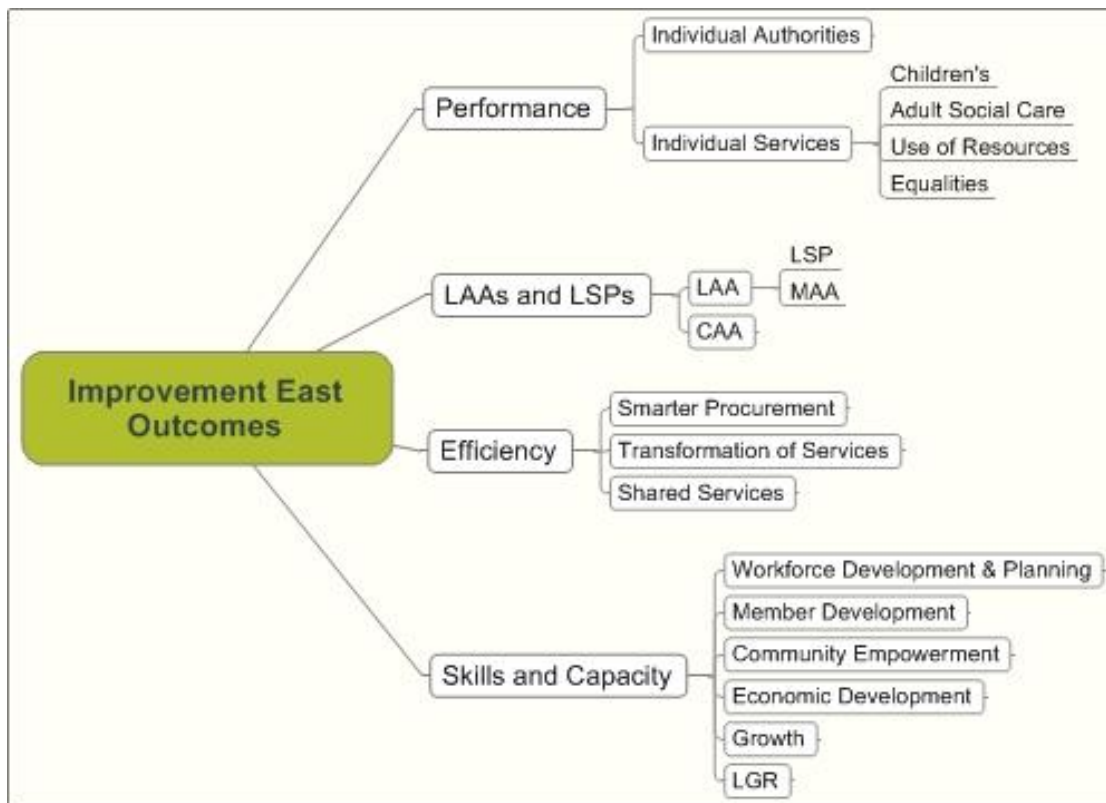
Andrea Hill

Chair, Improvement East Executive Advisory Group
and Chief Executive, Suffolk County Council

Section one

Summary of progress in year 2

In our second year, we continued to drive forward the four main themes identified in the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Strategy (RIES) illustrated below:-



A table showing how Improvement East has addressed these priorities is shown in Appendix two

We continued to develop our politically led governance structure and provided the cluster groups, or commissioning groups leading these themes with delegated power to develop programmes to meet these regional priorities. This approach has ensured that the partnership is sector led and with the involvement of partners in the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East), the Audit Commission, the East of England Development Agency (EEDA), the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), a raft of new and innovative programmes are being delivered to drive up performance and increase efficiency.

Supporting our authorities has delivered £11million efficiency savings since 2008.

- **six authorities are receiving a comprehensive package of support**
- **205 users are registered with our new regional Procurement Hub**
- **200 people attended 18 Business Process Improvement (BPI) training courses**
- **53 authorities took up our 'Summer Picnic' menu of support**
- **650 people attended networking events sponsored by Improvement East.**

Increased involvement with Improvement East

This involvement has translated into increased awareness of Improvement East and our recent perceptions survey showed that over 75% of respondents felt 'well informed' about the support provided by the RIEP. A similar percentage of respondents felt that the RIEP should continue to be funded to support collaboration between authorities.

According to this latest survey, 75% of authorities are aware of Improvement East compared to 55% in a similar survey carried out at the end of 2008. More significantly, is the engagement of partners with 70 per cent saying they are receiving support from Improvement East compared to 38% in December 2008.

The perceptions survey was completed by over 300 people from district, county and unitary councils including leaders, elected Members and senior management teams. It also had a good response from fire and rescue authorities in our region and partners such as GO-East and EEDA.

Testimonials

The following feedback was collected as part of the survey:-

"Very accessible and supportive. Provides a good level of support to my organisation and my Member organisations which is greatly appreciated."

"It is of local government rather than for it or imposed upon it, that is its success."

"We would have struggled without the support of the RIEP. They have helped us significantly improve performance in a number of critical areas."

"Found working with Improvement East straight forward and easy, they are a listening organisation."

Section two

Performance programme

Driving up performance in individual authorities that are facing significant corporate challenges and support to key service areas

Budget: £4,357, 000 Committed: £4,185,260

Supporting individual authorities

One of Improvement East's greatest strengths is the willingness of the sector in our region to support struggling **individual authorities**. There has been no intervention by Whitehall at a corporate level in authorities in the East of England. In 2009/2010 we directly supported nine individual authorities which were experiencing difficulties such as a corporate failing, a service specific issue and/or a Use of Resources score of 1. Through use of peer support and improvement boards, significant and tangible improvements

have been identified in those authorities that we have supported over the year. This is evidenced through improved use of resources scores and organisational assessment results.

Case study one - sector led support of Thurrock Council, Essex

Improvement East has built an excellent reputation for sector led improvement and has made a real difference to the performance of some councils such as **Thurrock**. Led by the chief executive of Suffolk County Council the Improvement East team has helped Thurrock quickly implement its improvement plan. The team, also made up of representatives from GO-East, the Audit Commission and the IDeA have met with the authority on a monthly basis and have used their expertise to support Thurrock and be their 'critical friend'. This has resulted in them moving from a position of 'improving inadequately' and on the brink of government intervention to an organisational assessment of 2.

The role of the Improvement East team has been welcomed by the Leader, Garry Hague who said;

*"Working alongside the Improvement Board has provided key additional expertise and support to enable us to remain focused on the most important development and change areas. Equally, the challenge from a strong group of external peers has ensured we maintain an external focus on what good performance looks like across the country." **

** see appendix 1 for a more detailed case study*

Supporting key services

A key focus for the RIEP has been the two major areas of **Adult Social Care and Children's services**. The Adult Social Care Joint Improvement Partnership (JIP) continues to deliver the projects that were funded by Improvement East in 2008/09. During 2009/10 the JIP has also developed further projects, such as procurement and support for dementia. The latter is delivering choice and independence to those living with dementia through increasing access to individual budgets.

These projects aim to address poor performance in any authority as well as raising standards across all 11 in a particular theme. In 2009 the Care Quality Commission (CQC) rates all but one of the region's top-tier authorities as 'improving well', the remaining one is 'improving adequately'. In the 2008 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), eight authorities were rated 3 on the adult social care measure, with the remaining two on 2.

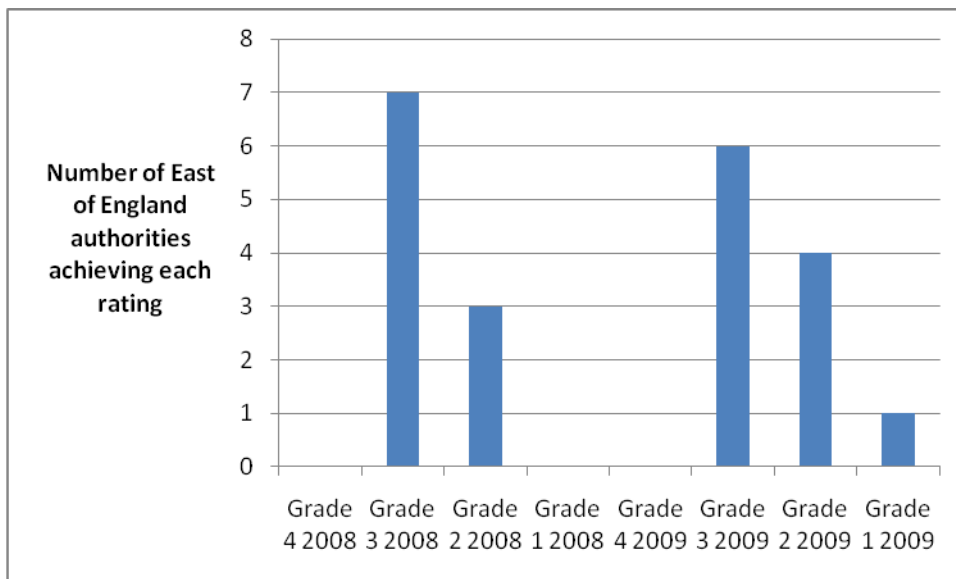
"Using support from Improvement East, we have been able to streamline social care procurement to develop and agree a standardised toolkit for purchasing adult social care and housing support services in the region, reducing the administrative burden for providers and councils.

This collaborative approach, involving all 11 councils in the region, means the process is embedded across the East of England and is tailored to suit regional and local needs, providing authorities with an estimated potential saving of up to five per cent following full implementation."

Dr Pauline Lane, JIP Regional Programme Manager

The latest Ofsted assessments of **children’s services** underline the challenges that remain in the region. As in 2008, no authorities are rated as performing Excellently (Grade 4) while one falls into the lowest category. Improvement East will continue to focus on safeguarding across the region and support for the two new unitary authorities.

Ofsted Children’s Services ratings



A major project relating to Children’s Safeguarding has been developed and funded with £750,000 this year. The project aims to secure a step-change in safeguarding performance, a standardised quality assurance system, capacity to continue improving children’s services and a reduction in social work vacancy rates.

Case study two - supporting children’s services across the East of England

Improvement East supported a regional initiative to ensure readiness of all authorities to take on the responsibility for the planning and funding of education and training for 16-19 year olds from April 2010. The appointment of a programme manager has provided a dedicated resource to manage the change process across the region, develop the strategy, structures and processes needed for the future and ensure a smooth transition. Funding has also been used to build capacity in the local authorities and to develop and implement a regional response to managing the budget and services for vulnerable learners. The region is now well-placed for transition and has also contributed effectively to national discussions and development.

Supporting priority areas: Use of Resources (UoR)

This is a key performance issue in the East of England and in Spring 2009, Improvement East commissioned the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Grant Thornton to deliver a series of UoR improvement programmes for local authorities and fire and rescue authorities in the East of England. This support has helped the region to improve its Use of Resources scores, with all previous Level 1 authorities now achieving a Level 2. One previously Level 2 authority has slipped back to a Level 1, but support is being provided to quickly assist this authority in their improvement journey.

Case study three - supporting the improvement of Use of Resources scores

Each improvement programme consisted of two day action learning events, with delegates being asked to undertake work between each workshop, in particular to draft a UoR improvement plan for their organisation.

- A total of 115 people attended the programmes, representing 38 of the 52 local councils in the region, and one fire and rescue service.
- Levels of satisfaction for the programmes were high, with 94% evaluating the outcomes of the programmes as either 'good' or 'very good'. Comments from attendees included the following:

"The Use of Resources workshop events were an opportunity to validate our improvement programme against the key lines of enquiry and that of our peers. They also highlighted areas needing immediate improvement if we wanted to be able to evidence our performance in the use of resources framework. However, the workshops weren't just about improving our Use of Resources scores. The insight provided during the session as well as the opportunity to share our successes and concerns with peers, has been invaluable in helping us develop our long term improvement plans." **Dacorum Borough Council**

Following on from the Improvement Programmes, an interactive 'How To Guide' was launched and an Action Learning Set has now been developed, which meets on a bi-monthly basis and involves officers from counties, unitaries, districts and fire authorities. Feedback has been very positive:

"Thanks for yesterday it was one of the most useful events I've attended relating to CAA, and has given us lots of good practice on which to base our preparations for our next round."
Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue attendee at an Action Learning Set

Equalities

The other key area where this region has not performed well in relation to others is the Equality Framework for local government. To address this, a support programme has been delivered which has included conferences, best practice workshops and surgeries. Tailored support has been given to the lowest performing authorities. The latest figures show that 21 of the region's authorities have improved their score on the Equality Framework between 2008 and 2009. All authorities now score at least a 2 – 'developing' on the new framework.

There are still a number of authorities in our region that require individual support and Improvement East was quick to assist six authorities who failed to meet their responsibilities in terms of gender equality in November 2009.

Case study four - meeting the Equality challenge

The aim of the project has been to deliver a programme of support to local authorities across the East of England to help them make progress on their Equality Standard which was to be migrated to the new Equality Framework for local government from April 2009. The support programme consisted of a menu of support customised to meet the needs of local authorities, including:-

- **regional workshops** – workshops open to all authorities and focussing on issues identified by practitioners
- **in-house support** – targeted at district councils largely at 'Developing' level in the new Equality Framework to help them build capacity and accelerate their progress to the 'Achieving' level
- **peer review** – available to authorities who have a target date for the external assessment for the 'Achieving' level to ensure that they are ready for the external challenge.

Outcomes:

- all authorities have migrated to the new Equality Framework and have developed an updated Equality Action Plan.
- Overall, **36%** of authorities at the 'Developing' level at the beginning of the project have either already gained the 'Achieving' level or actively working towards it. This represents improvement in nearly half of the authorities originally at Levels 1 and 2 of the Equality Standard.

"I can feel that things are changing round here. People are picking up issues which they would not have done in the past. We are now talking and doing equality and diversity."

An equalities officer of a district council participating in an in-house programme

"Excellent. Very useful information. Inspirational sharing of knowledge and expertise."

A local authority officer's evaluation on a regional workshop.

Corporate issues

Supporting Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAA)

Improvement East has been on the front foot in respect of Comprehensive Area Assessment. Regular liaison meetings have been held between the RIEP, the Audit Commission, GO-East and the IDEa to ensure that there is a proper and timely exchange of information.

This group has also coordinated efforts to ensure and enable early support to be given to any authority that might receive a poor assessment. For example, Brentwood Borough Council, who scored a 1 for Use of Resources has already received:

- financial support to:
 - undertake a financial diagnostic
 - create skilled and sustainable financial management capability
 - improve the management of data
 - improve organisational capacity to manage risk effectively, as an integral part of the planning and performance management framework.
- the support of a lead chief executive from a strongly performing authority

In addition, financial support from Improvement East has enabled a programme to be devised for 2010/11 which will focus on the authorities and themes that require support. Following two successful events run in 2009, an upcoming regional event on CAA is planned to ensure that lessons learnt are disseminated, good practice is shared and that authorities are best placed for the assessment process in 2010.

Case study five - the 'Summer Picnic' of support

Improvement East has also provided general support for capacity building in authorities through its 'Summer Picnic' initiative. This scheme gives each local authority and fire authority the opportunity to spend £10,000 on an identified improvement need. Authorities have either taken up options from an existing menu of support or have opted to 'bring their own' idea forward. The Summer Picnic has:-

- helped Improvement East to engage with nearly all of its authorities, with 53 out of 58 authorities taking up this offer of support
- allowed authorities to target their own improvement needs, with 36 out of the 53 participants putting forward their own ideas for funding
- supported modernisation and efficiency, with a broad range of initiatives looking at change management, whole systems thinking, Member development and greater collaboration between authorities.

Not surprisingly, the 'Summer Picnic' has been well received by our authorities, with feedback including the following:

"The 'Summer Picnic' has proved to be timely and flexible; it has enabled us to continue to meet officer training and development needs which will ultimately improve this authority's delivery of service to the customer." **Forest Heath District Council.**

Section three

LAA/LSP (Leadership of Place)

Building capacity of individual strategic partnerships and supporting regional LAA priorities such as climate change and worklessness

Budget: £1,620 000 Committed: £1,181,000

Leadership of Place

In our year 2 delivery plan, we detailed our commitment to working with Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) and Local Area Agreement (LAA) boards in delivering priority outcomes for their communities. Whilst this commitment has continued and grown, the mechanism for delivering this support has changed from what was originally envisaged, with a particular focus on the emerging 'Total Place' agenda.

Activity within the early months of 2009/10 helped to inform this progression. In particular, the East of England experienced significant fall-out from Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and the **Norfolk LEAPP** and **Suffolk 'Lives We Lead'** programmes were launched as a response to this, with over 200 managers working together from across Norfolk and the development of a 'Leadership Collaborative' of public and third sector leaders across Suffolk.

This ground breaking work led to our region's own distinct approach, which we call '**Leadership of Place**'. Rather than building separate pilot projects, the East of England has concentrated on developing a sustainable programme of activity to build a 'new way of working'. This is in recognition that a radical approach to working across the public sector, third sector and with business is vital if we are to continue delivering for communities and respond to significant budget reductions. For example:

- £1.6 million of funding has been provided by Improvement East to support 'Total Place', with a further commitment of up to £3.5 million being discussed for 2010/11 subject to Communities and Local Government (CLG) funding
- sixty-six per cent of all local authorities across our region are directly engaged, including all eleven upper tier areas
- shared services projects linked to the Norfolk LEAPP and Suffolk 'Lives We Lead' programmes have already identified £4.5 million in annual efficiency savings, with more projects in development
- new ways of providing benefit services across Central Bedfordshire and Luton Councils have indicated minimum annual savings of £800,000 and considerable scope for improved customer experience
- 'deep dive' themes in the east are varied and offer much scope for learning regionally and nationally. They include: High Contact Families, Drugs and Alcohol, NEET's, Safeguarding, Offender Management, Access to Benefits and Educational Attainment.

Total Place - high level count. The map on the right shows the results of the high level count across the region totalling £40.1bn of public spending. These startling figures have helped make a case for undertaking further work on ‘Leadership of Place’.



It is evident that many of partnerships are using the Leadership of Place or Total place approach to meet their LAA objectives. A good example of this is the work that is taking place in Essex and Suffolk:-

Case study six - Essex Works: Essex Counts

The Essex Partnership is leading a ‘**Total Place**’ Project to reduce the numbers of young people who are Not in Employment or Training (NEET), a key LAA priority.

A ‘deep dive’ in Tendring District, which has double the average percentage for NEET for Essex, is engaging schools, Connexions, the youth service, employers and the voluntary sector. These partners have put forward many views on factors that cause young people to be NEET, where the system is not working, and ideas to address the problem. Resource mapping indicates a bias towards NEET reduction over prevention. The partnership will be interviewing over 500 young people across the County to understand their experiences of services and how these might be improved.

Case study seven - 'Lives we Lead: the Leaders we Need', Suffolk

The '**Lives we Lead**' initiative had at its core a leadership collaborative of 22 private, public and voluntary sector leaders who joined forces to find ways to improve quality of life for people in Suffolk. They set out to engage directly with citizens to gain insight into real life challenges and to understand how existing service provision helps or hinders in meeting these needs. Through sharing challenging, and at times, uncomfortable experiences, they developed a deep degree of trust and professional friendship which allowed them space to innovate, take risks and collaborate in a way that was not previously possible.

As a result of this project, public sector agencies in Suffolk have:-

- mapped £4.8bn of public expenditure in the county and moved to collaborate to remove barriers, leverage resources and respond to local priorities
- held a hugely successful 'New Horizons' Innovation Summit bringing together 250 leaders from the public, private and third sectors to engage in this new way of working
- highlighted a family receiving over 700 different interventions from public services in a single year, with estimated costs potentially £800,000
- moved to develop a regional approach to collaborative working on areas of joint-interest, such as High Contact Families
- shared services projects linked to the Suffolk 'Lives We Lead' and Norfolk LEAPP programmes have already identified £4.5 million in annual efficiency savings, with more projects in development.

Climate Change Partnership (CCP)

We have been the majority funding organisation for Climate East, the regions Climate Change Partnership (CCP) and are a key player in the CCP Steering Group. The CCP has been leading the regional presence on climate change since May 2009 serving to disseminate information, share experience and clarify the challenge for the region.

We have funded the purchase of the London Energy Projects Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) Toolkit and Guide designed to prepare the public sector for the arrival of the CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme, due to start in April 2010. It has also provided authorities with a toolkit enabling them to allocate LAA targets for NI186 (reductions in CO₂ from an area). Use of the toolkit ensures a consistent approach to identifying the scale of local interventions needed over the three year period of the LAA.

Climate East is preparing for the release of the regional action plan with the East of England Implementation plan during early 2010. We will be the first region to have a climate change plan integrated into the regional strategy document. A Local Improvement Advisor (LIA) was enlisted to work with authorities and prepare the report 'Synthesising Local Plans' into a Regional Climate Change Action plan for the East of England.

In October 2009 the new UK Climate Change Projections were introduced to the region during a 'Projections in Practice week'. Climate East hosted an event and worked in partnership with authorities from Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridge and Luton on this. Benefits of the day included:- a national perspective from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and presentations of the projections from the United Kingdom Climate Impacts Programme (UKCIP). Locally based case studies and practical

workshops showing 'real life' examples and scenarios were also demonstrated. Over the week 236 delegates attended and 60 people were trained in detail on how to use the detailed projections.

Section four

Efficiency programme

A comprehensive package of support to increase smart procurement, stimulate collaboration and build capacity for business transformation.

Budget: £4,575,000 Committed: £2,718,000

In the first year Improvement East started building a new efficiency programme from scratch and prioritised procurement at the start of the second year.

- by the end of 2009/10 our target is to have helped authorities save £20 million
- by the end of 2010/11 this will rise to £30 million
- with further investment this increases to £100 million by 2013/4

Supporting smart procurement

The Improvement East Procurement Hub, which includes a searchable web based database of regional and national framework contracts, was launched in August 2009 and there are currently almost 250 registered users, with this figure growing steadily. More importantly, users of the Hub are now able to begin making substantial efficiency savings using the signposting service it affords the user. For example:

- a Borough council has reported savings of £17,500 in the purchase cost of four vehicles, as well as avoiding traditional tendering costs at just over £20,000 through the increased use of framework agreements
- the new regional Procurement East Network (PEN) for procurement officers, acts as a focal point for project development on the collaborative agenda and is currently tendering a regional supplier spend analysis for all 41 of our district and borough councils
- we are commissioning an e-auction for 'home to school' passenger transport in Essex before the end of the financial year, drawing on support from the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) and learning from the West Midlands Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (WMIIEP). We aim to save several million pounds for Essex County Council through this which will act as a pilot for the region, in which several other councils are now interested
- we are stimulating a collaborative procurement for a multi-authority insurance procurement project which aims to save over £1 million per annum across a 12 authority partnership for the three years of the contract
- A highways alliance for the strategic procurement of road building and major maintenance contracts has been developed in collaboration with Cambridgeshire County Council and funded in part by Department for Highways. This should save the region £6 million within the first three years of operation from 2010/11.

Case study eight - Essex Procurement Agency

An example of how we can support procurement across the public sector is through the **Essex Procurement Agency's** pan-sector initiative. Improvement East is funding Essex County Council to lead cross sector collaboration in Essex across three inter-linked categories – ICT, transport and commercial vehicles.

This project already has senior engagement with the National Health Service (NHS), Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), fire and rescue services, Police and higher education. Project teams have been established for each category, overseen by a steering group which contains procurement representation from each sector.

There is an ambitious potential savings target of £20 million per annum and the first results from the project are expected in the summer of 2010. It is expected that creating a 'proof of concept' using these three pilot categories will strengthen the case for long-term formal procurement collaboration across the wider public sector in Essex and the region. The earliest impacts of the project will be :-

- doubling the value of spend influenced by public sector procurement in Essex
- creation of a single transport hub for Essex during 2010/11
- minimum of £120,000 savings achieved by December 2010 with a target of £2 million per annum from financial year 2011/12

Supporting business transformation

Improvement East is funding a number of transformation diagnostics for our authorities: Hertfordshire, Central Bedfordshire and Peterborough City Council are all currently engaged. Up to 50 per cent of funding is being provided for the diagnostic phases of DECATS – Delivering Efficient Corporate and Transactional Services.

The end objective is to improve service delivery, achieving efficiencies through the introduction of organisation generic processes across the organisations, designing the services around the customer and aligning resources to these areas. The approach includes knowledge and skills transfer from our partner's to the local authorities to enable them to use the diagnostic toolkit again in the future to validate and update findings.

The key outcomes are:

- increased capacity and skills and in the longer term organisational performance
- redesigned or shared business processes
- Establish a portfolio of improvement projects
- Defined costs and benefits of the identified opportunities
- support the authorities transformation programmes
- Cost and time-releasing savings that support the authorities financial challenges

Case Study nine – DECATS, Hertfordshire County Council

Improvement East provided 50% of the funding for Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to undertake their diagnostic in May 2009. Our partners in this exercise, Local Partnerships, believe that the strong project team at the council was essential to delivering a robust diagnostic. As a result, business cases have been developed in three tiers of opportunity. These eleven business cases cover core themes including:-

- improving the customer experience
- developing an intelligence-led organisation
- service property rationalisation
- procurement centralisation
- 'Total Place' and rationalising pan sector opportunities

Hertfordshire has used the DECATS findings to scope a transformation programme through which it plans to deliver efficiency savings totalling £73.6million over three years.

A precursor to business transformation is the skills to make the necessary changes and Improvement East has developed a comprehensive package of training and support for business process improvement consisting of:

- lean and systems thinking course
- programme management training
- activity based costing course
- on-site consultancy support

Over 18 courses have been run in 2009 attended by over 200 people across our region and links are being made to the Leadership of Place agenda. Funding has also been made available for further in-house business process reengineering and a network to support this area of work has been maintained by Improvement East.

Supporting shared services

Improvement East launched a Shared Services workstream in year 2 as a response to the demand from authorities for funding new business cases and feasibility studies and as a result of increased collaboration initiated by the 'Leadership of Place' initiatives across the region. The proposals we are supporting range from shared revenue and benefits services, to the merger of council management teams, and a good return on investment is a precursor to securing Improvement East financial support for efficiency projects.

Watford and Three Rivers councils are implementing shared services initiatives combining ICT, Human Resources, Finance and Revenues and Benefits services. By 2013/14 the total net benefit is expected to be £3.2 million (adjusted to £2.5 million for NPV) whilst reaching top quartile performance.

The authorities will create increased resilience by sharing specialists, being less vulnerable to key personnel departures and by not competing for the same resources. Efficiencies will come from economies of scale and reduction in expenditure on goods and services through joint procurement. Reduction of IT licence

costs through harmonising systems, integration and co-location of systems and transferring some functions which are currently contracted out to the shared service without increasing headcount will also occur.

The expected savings by service are:

Shared Service	Amount £
Human Resources	482,000
ICT	1,162,000
Finance	791,000
Revenues and Benefits	98,000
Retained Functions	202,000

To encourage further collaboration between authorities on the efficiency agenda we have developed a regional network of Finance Directors (FDs) who are now helping to shape our agenda and future programmes. We have already created an online facility for sharing business cases securely within the FD network and we are currently investigating the possibilities of sharing National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) services at the request of the FD network.

We have recently commissioned a regional study to assess the support for an outline business case for regional or sub-regional NNDR services(s) in consultation with the Finance Directors network. This feasibility report will be completed by the end of year 2 and will indicate the appetite, benefits and constraints within the region for such a collaborative venture and identify the possibility for savings through:

- asset rationalisation and co location
- systems and software integration and reduced licence costs
- potential reduction in headcount supporting these services.

Case study ten - supporting Fire and Rescue Services

Improvement East has actively engaged with the Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) in the region committing funds to a project shared by five out of the six FRS.

The 'Middleware' programme opens the possibility of Fire and Rescue Services being able to exchange data with the Regional Control Centre (RCC) and their local partners (for example; building control, adult services) efficiently, resiliently and securely. It also supports services being able to bring their data under better control, reducing duplication and inconsistency.

Improvement East has committed £300,000 to the programme from our Efficiency and Transformation funds and anticipates efficiencies of £2.7 million from cost avoidance as a result.

It is envisaged that Fire and Rescue Services adopting this programme will be able to:

- reliably send operational data to the RCC as part of the national FiReControl programme
- exchange data with local partners to improve the delivery of Local Strategic Partnerships

- better utilise data available within their systems and thereby improve performance management

more....

As a technology supporting collaboration, the platform will inherently be a shared resource. The initial implementation project will work across all participating organisations and the collaboration team has a remit to identify and implement learning initiatives across piece from which we will develop a case study for national purposes.

The project is being considered by Communities and Local Government (CLG) as a blueprint for data exchange between FRS's and their RCCs in other parts of the country.

Section five

Skills and Capacity programme

Developing the skills and capacity of all authorities to meet the challenges of new agendas

Budget: £1,180,000 Committed: £898,281

Supporting economic development

The main focus for this part of our year two delivery plan has been the economic recession and how we can support our authorities and a separate implementation group of Members, chief executives and partners has been set up to move things forward. As a result of this increased focus on economic development there has been an increase in work on:-

- worklessness – workshops and seminars and now three pilots funded in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
- economic capacity building – a series of workshops and training on economic development assessments across the region
- European funding – an initiative to increase the capacity of authorities to access European funding in the region.

Our authorities have been hit hard by the recession and so have their communities. Improvement East was quick to respond to the down turn and we have worked with authorities not only to build their economic development capacity but to increase work on issues such as worklessness.

- over 100 local authority officers attended training to build economic capacity, with 100 per cent agreeing they had learnt something new
- 15 local authority Members have received economic development training
- establishment of a community of practice to support local authorities in completing local economic assessments, including five networking meetings and a training programme
- nine authorities were supported in 1-1 European funding bid writing
- seven authorities were supported to improve worklessness, including Cambridgeshire to be supported in developing a work and skills plan, Central Bedfordshire Council to be supported in establishing an employment and skills board and Suffolk County Council in developing local area action plans.

Case Study eleven - supporting strategic economic partnerships

An example of how Improvement East has support strategic economic partnerships in the region was the use of the IDeA Economic Prosperity Toolkit diagnostic in the Thames Gateway South East Essex Partnership (TGSEP). South Essex faces a number of key economic challenges; from low productivity levels and business survival rates, to low skill levels and a poor inward investment track record. As a result, officers across the partnership recognised the need to work together differently. With the current climate adding additional pressures, and the differences in local authority areas and councils, this was a complex and difficult task.

The Partnership piloting of the IDeA toolkit was part of a wider evaluation of the diagnostic. The TGSEP and local authority officers played a significant role in developing a tool that will be used country-wide by a variety of organisations. While this benefits promoting economic development nationally, as described above, the pilot comes at a pivotal time for TGSEP and will be instrumental in aiding the success of the partnership. The key outcomes from the diagnostic were:-

- a clear commitment from local authority officers to TGSEP
- plans to address the information deficit and enhance understanding of the functional economic area, through a programme of sub-regional intelligence gathering (funded by EEDA)
- the creation of a forum for stakeholders and the identification of the need to work with other agencies and the voluntary sector more closely
- the development of a concise, rationalised action plan for 2009-2011
- the formation of an officers group with extended Membership to sit below the chief executives group
- plans to develop a strong programme of partnership with the private sector.

The project enabled a commitment to partnership working on economic development, made a significant contribution to a suite of strategic documents and provided an enhanced approach to leadership.

Gary Sullivan, Chairman of Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership said *“The toolkit provided us with a valuable tool to support our business planning process. It gave us reassurance about our areas of strength and directed us towards practical conclusions and learning for areas where there are opportunities for further improvement”*.

Case study twelve - supporting Local Government Review

Improvement East has supported the transition of the Bedfordshire authorities to their new unitary status following Local Government Review and captured the learning from this process for the future. This included a peer learning review of the three authorities before and after transition to unitary status. As well as this, the £410,000 from Improvement East funded:-

- additional capacity for programme management to assist the authorities with their transition plans
- support for Member development for 124+ shadow councillors prior to transition
- a risk analysis of the ICT transition programme for Adult Social Care (ASC)

Supporting Member development

The Skills and Capacity cluster has commissioned over £1 million of new programmes in the region to ensure the sector has the new skills for new agendas. One of the key areas it has focused on is the role of politicians in the region.

Local politicians today face an unprecedented set of challenges, challenges that require politics to up its game if politicians are going to be able to re-establish trust with the electorate. As well as this politicians face more structural challenges such as this generation will now have to face a future with declining resources for public services (after 10 years of growth).

Improvement East have commissioned the Leadership Centre to develop a connected set of initiatives to help restore confidence in local politics. These go beyond a revamp of 'Member development' and form a strategy to ensure we have local politics fit for purpose. Our **21st Century Councillor programme** will be launched in the spring of 2010 with a programme for public sector leaders called **Leadership East** and will:-

- be distinctive and relevant regionally, locally and nationally
- create a critical mass to sustain impact
- engage with a range of delivery partners to deliver value for money
- be timely – to shape the future of the East of England
- make a difference
- secure some momentum

Supporting growth, community empowerment and workforce development

Improvement East has supported these three areas with £920,000 of funding to partnerships implementing innovative projects across the regions. Some examples are listed below:

- **Growth**
 - almost £200,000 funding to Regional Cities East to build capacity across the ‘engines of growth’ in the region which has included city seminar workshops to review current capacity and engaging with other key growth areas to establish joint working and sharing of best practice over issues such as urban design and senior skills
- **Community empowerment**
 - £200,000 has been committed to the Regional Empowerment Partnership which, amongst other priorities, has engaged local authority communications officers and raised awareness of NI4 and promoted the empowering authorities of Great Yarmouth and Ipswich
- **Workforce development**
 - £100,000 to form a new sector led partnership to improve culture and sports across the region leading to a shared service proposal for the libraries service between Suffolk County Council in partnership with Cambridgeshire County Council, Essex County Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Council. The options appraisal will identify potential savings for the partners involved.

Section six Priorities for year 3

The Improvement East Member Panel and Executive Advisory Group have agreed that Improvement East should sharpen its focus and reduce its number of workstreams down from four to three, with the LSP/LAA and Skills and Capacity Clusters merging to form a single workstream around ‘Leadership of Place’. We will continue to prioritise our work on efficiency and improving performance and will have a delivery plan centred on:-

- Performance – supporting individual authorities and key services
- Efficiency – driving out further efficiencies across the public sector
- ‘Leadership of Place’ – continuing to support leaders in delivery of their LAA outcomes through ‘Total Place’ and ‘Leadership of Place’

Performance

Improvement East has made real headway in our second year with the support of all of our 58 authorities across our region. There is still a great deal to do to and in our third year we will need to continue to focus on the performance of key services, particularly children’s and adults, as well as helping drive out efficiencies. Improvement East already has over £1 million of forward commitments for 2010/11 including £750, 000 to support increased activity on children’s services.

Efficiency

We are planning for further improvement in our efficiency programme for year 3, expanding our most successful schemes and enhancing our capacity to bringing further offers to the partners – mindful of the need to accelerate efficiency savings within the authorities.

Improvement East started its efficiency programme from scratch and the demand for investment in efficiency initiatives is increasing in the East of England as our efficiency programme expands. At the meeting of the efficiency cluster in January 2010, over £1.8 million was committed to 18 projects that will deliver over £11 million Return on Investment (ROI) of which nearly £9 million is predicted to be annual savings. Every day authorities are coming forward with new proposals and if they can demonstrate they will deliver an excellent ROI then Improvement East is ready to support them-

Leadership of Place

Over 60% of the region are developing 'Total Place' and 'Leadership of Place' initiatives and this is leading to concrete proposals on shared services which will require investment from Improvement East in year 3. As well as this, the programme to support economic development is gathering pace and plans are in place to extend work on worklessness and support for authorities during the recession.

Section seven Finance

Funding Stream	Amount	£
Brought forward from year 1/legacy funding		5,454,851
CLG Funding 2009/10		7,951,875
Climate Change Funding 08/09 (Received 09/10)		53,013
Climate Change Funding 09/10		61,760
Skills & Worklessness		100,000
Capital Efficiency & Transformation Fund – Yr 1		2,230,000
Capital Efficiency & Transformation Fund – Yr 2		3,541,235
Neighbourhood Renewal		50,846
Department for Transport		200,000
		19,643,580
TOTAL		

Budget	Allocated	Spend ¹	Unallocated/ Contingency
19,643,580	19,294,933	11,907,574	£348,647

The table above demonstrates that all the funding has been committed to programmes which are making good progress. The year 3 delivery plan will be considered by the Improvement East member panel on the 24 February 2010 and this plan includes the £7 million of CLG funding for 2010/11.

¹ Includes committed

Appendix one

Thurrock Improvement Journey supported by Improvement East

Recent comprehensive area assessment (CAA) scores made uncomfortable reading for some local authorities with poor organisational assessments or red flags. So what is the answer? Send in the government inspectors and greater regulation?

Improvement East has developed a better way: it uses experts from the local government family and beyond to help turn around struggling authorities in the region.

A recent example of where this approach is working is Thurrock council. In December's CAA assessments, the Audit Commission described Thurrock as an improving council. But only nine months ago, the council was considered to be 'not performing adequately', with some serious question marks about financial management, governance and partnership.

This is a significant improvement in a short period of time. Councils like Thurrock have improved with support from neighbouring council chief executives and partners rather than as a result of further inspection or more regulation. Stepping in to support one another is becoming the sector's instinctive response in the East of England, as we already have the skills and experience in local authorities to help others improve.

Sector-led improvement teams, led by the RIEP, are the way forward: local communities have already seen tangible improvements to key services, particularly housing.

The Improvement East team at Thurrock is led by Andrea Hill, Suffolk's chief executive. Along with colleagues from the Improvement and Development Agency, the Government Office for the East of England and the Audit Commission, the team has challenged and supported the authority in its improvement journey.

Garry Hague, leader of Thurrock council, recognises the importance of sector-led support. He says: "Working alongside the improvement board has provided key additional expertise and support to enable us to remain focused on the most important development and change areas.

Improvement East helped Thurrock to identify its key priorities:

- Member/officer working
- financial management
- strategic communications.

Improvement East then used the skills and experience from the sector and its own funding to address them swiftly. Improvement East initially committed £130,000, then offered £300,000 to be matched by Thurrock from their own improvement fund.

The 2009 CAA organisational assessment of 2009 gave evidence of Thurrock's progress:

- Thurrock was judged to be performing adequately overall, with scores of 2 for both managing performance and use of resources.
- the Audit Commission concluded that the council is "addressing weaknesses and services are improving". It also noted that "Leadership is improving".

A number of key performance indicators are moving in the right direction. For example, the proportion of Thurrock's 15 year olds achieving the benchmark of five good GCSEs including English and Maths has increased by 8.9 percentage points in the last two years – a rate of improvement well ahead of the national average.

Thurrock Council is now a stronger organisation that is in a position to work better with partners to deal with area-wide challenges such as community cohesion and educational attainment, particularly in the primary sector, which were flagged up as concerns.

The authority and Improvement East are determined to put Thurrock on the map for all the right reasons: developments such as the new Royal Opera House Production Park are already changing the community's cultural outlook and raising aspirations, while improving employment, inward investment and economic opportunities.

This determination to improve is summed up by Cllr Hague: "There is much to do, but there is a real ambition shared between the council and its partners to create a fresh ethos across the borough, one characterised by ambition, enterprise and opportunity."

Appendix two

The Regional Improvement and Efficiency Strategy (RIES)

Impact on priorities – how Improvement East has added value (see diagram on page 4)

RIES Priority : Performance	How Improvement East has added value
<p>Individual authorities</p>	<p>Tailored support</p> <p>In 2009/2010 we directly supported nine individual authorities which were experiencing difficulties such as a corporate failing, a service specific issue and/or a Use of Resources score of 1. Through use of peer support and Improvement Boards, significant and tangible improvements have been identified in those authorities that we have supported over the year. This is evidenced through improved Use of Resources scores and organisational assessment results.</p> <p>In 2009, Norwich Council received a poor inspection score for their housing landlord services. Improvement East was quick to respond and has offered a package of support including a short term secondment, monthly attendance at housing improvement board meetings along with financial support for training and development and the cost of a housing peer review by the IDEA in March 2010.</p> <p>In July, the Summer Picnic offer of support was launched. This enabled all 58 authorities to select resources from a menu of support, which allowed them to align support to their own improvement priorities. The Picnic was taken up by 53 out of 58 authorities and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.</p> <p>Use of Resources</p> <p>Improvement East’s support to individual authorities has ensured that struggling authorities are helped quickly, before triggering statutory interventions. Only one authority in the region had a UoR score in the lowest category in the 2009 CAA. The Use of Resources ‘How to Guide’ was updated in December 2009 after the delivery of the final ‘Managing Resources’ programmes in October 2009. Following feedback from delegates to the Use of Resources Improvement Programmes, an Action Learning Set has also been established to provide peer support across the region.</p> <p>Equalities</p> <p>Tailored support has been given to the lowest performing authorities. Overall, 36% of authorities at the Developing level at the beginning of the project have either already gained the Achieving level or actively working towards it. This represents nearly half of the authorities originally at Levels 1 and 2 of the</p>

	<p>Equality Standard.</p> <p>There are still a number of authorities in the region that require individual support and Improvement East was quick to assist six authorities who failed to meet their responsibilities in terms of gender equality in November 2009.</p>
<p>Individual services</p>	<p>Children’s Services</p> <p>A major project relating to Children’s Safeguarding has been developed and funded with £750,000 this year. The project aims to secure a step-change in safeguarding performance, a standardised quality assurance system, capacity to continue improving children’s services and a reduction in social work vacancy rates. Improvement East’s project fills a vital gap in central government funded improvement support around safeguarding. This activity will continue to be delivered in Year 3.</p> <p>Adult Social Care</p> <p>The Adult Social Care Joint Improvement Partnership continues to deliver the projects that were funded by Improvement East in 2008/09 and has developed further projects which have been funded such as procurement and dementia in 2009/10. A number of workstreams have been completed, including projects on safeguarding and learning disabilities. The projects aim to address poor performance in any authority as well as raising standards across all 11 within a particular theme. In 2009 the Care Quality Commission (CQC) rated all but one of the region’s top-tier authorities as Improving Well, the remaining one is Improving Adequately.</p>
<p>RIES Priority : LAAs and LSPs</p>	<p>How Improvement East has added value</p>
	<p>Innovative LSPs</p> <p>Improvement East launched the Leading Together Programme in September 2009, along with an offer of additional funding to local authorities for resource mapping work. We have now agreed funding proposals from Norfolk, Suffolk, Peterborough, Southend and Thurrock. Proposals for Hertfordshire and Bedford Borough have also been received and are in the process of being finalised. There has been considerable enthusiasm from authorities to become involved with the ‘Total Place’ approach and some common themes have emerged across all authorities, especially High Contact Families and Education Attainment/Aspiration.</p> <p>The Leading Together project has largely been absorbed as the ‘cultural’ dimension of Improvement East’s work around Total Place/Leadership of Place and this has helped to capture the interest and enthusiasm of participating authorities.</p>

Supporting LAA outcomes

Community cohesion

Improvement East has funded a small research project on community mapping led by Cambridgeshire County Council. This project aims to provide local authorities with an ability to map their local communities and the leadership structures within them, the tools to monitor change within their local communities, such as identifying new and emerging communities and the knowledge of a range of good practice examples drawn from other areas both within and outside of the region. This will ensure that future community cohesion is backed up by strong local intelligence. Work has now commenced and the pilot areas have been identified as Cambridgeshire, Fenland and Ipswich.

Community empowerment

Through the Regional Empowerment Partnership, Improvement East supported two “empowering authorities” for the region - Ipswich and Great Yarmouth Borough Councils – to develop their own practice around community empowerment in order to share learning with other authorities.

Climate change

Improvement East supports Climate East - The East of England Climate Change Partnership which has been leading the regional presence on climate change since May 2009, serving to disseminate information, share experience and clarify the challenge for the region.

In March 2010 Climate East published The Path to Low Carbon which summarises the regional actions on climate change within the new East of England Implementation Plan and shows what Climate East will do to add value in order to meet the scale of the challenge. The East of England is the first region to have a climate change plan integrated into a regional strategy document

In addition, Climate East:

- hosts the local authority LAA Climate Change Group
- funded the purchase of the London Energy Projects Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) Toolkit and Guide in order to prepare the public sector in the region for the arrival of the CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme.
- provided authorities with a toolkit to allocate LAA targets for NI186 (reductions in CO2 from area) according to whether they would be delivered by national or local activity
- hosted an event with local authorities to present the new UK Climate Change Projections to regional stakeholders.

	<p><u>Skills and worklessness</u></p> <p>In January 2010, Improvement East held a 'Festival of Ideas' on long-term unemployment in the region, in conjunction with the Innovation Exchange. The day brought together innovators from the third sector with commissioners in the public sector who are looking for more effective solutions to complex issues. The festival encouraged public sector representatives to see the third sector as part of the solution to addressing complex issues and to look at how commissioning with the third sector might help the public sector to deliver better outcomes for people.</p> <p>DWP and CLG have provided each of the RIEPs with £100,000 to build local partnerships' capacity and capability to tackle worklessness. EEDA is leading this work in the East of England and is supplementing this money with ESF and EEDA funds. The programme is being delivered in line with milestones. Seven local authorities are receiving consultancy support to tackle worklessness and employment issues. The money is also funding activity on third sector social enterprise support. The final part of this work is the development of the Supporting Economic Development microsite.</p>
<p>CAA</p>	<p>Of the 58 East of England authorities, more than half (31) gained Organisational Assessment scores of 3 in the 2009 CAA. Only one authority scored an overall 1 and Improvement East is helping Brentwood District Council with a tailor-made package of support. In conjunction with the sector, Improvement East is developing a programme of support that will address CAA issues in the context of the wider picture of local authority performance. Improvement East will promote peer support between Chief Executives and work to improve the supply in the region of IDeA-accredited peers.</p>
<p>RIES Priority: Efficiency</p>	<p>How Improvement East has added value</p>
<p>Smarter procurement</p>	<p>Improvement East has created an online procurement hub which now has almost 300 registered users who can use the hub to search over 350 framework contracts. It has also supported collaborative approaches to procurement – giving support to Procurement Agency Essex (PAE) to develop pan-sector procurement collaboration and a shared procurement service hub in Hertfordshire. Improvement East has funded collaborative insurance procurement by 12 authorities - ten in our region and two in East Midlands. The anticipated savings for the authorities involved are £2.4M over a 3 year contract period.</p> <p>Improvement East is helping local authorities to grasp the cost-saving potential of e-auctions by promoting the programme of e-auctions run by the Office of Government Commerce. In April, Improvement East ran a successful pilot e-auction in partnership with Essex CC for passenger transport. The auction process realised an additional £150,000 in savings. The e-auction programme will be rolled out more widely next year.</p>

	A procurement Spend Analysis project is underway, with 39 of the 41 district and borough authorities committed to providing their data.
Transformation of services	Improvement East has developed a Business Process Improvement (BPI) workstream . It is supporting local authorities with an overpayments recovery scheme and is funding the development of a fire services regional data-sharing system. Improvement East’s Business Process Improvement (BPI) workshops continue to prove popular. More than 800 officers will have attended either a public venue or onsite workshop by the end of June 2010.
Shared services	To date, Improvement East has funded 21 projects to support the development of shared services. Savings of £6.7m are predicted. Improvement East has given support to six councils in district council management team and service mergers. This has consisted of financial provision for feasibility and business case development and an associated pilot programme for transition support for district council chief executives and directors undergoing management team mergers.
RIES Priority: Skills and Capacity	How Improvement East has added value
Workforce development and planning	In 2009/10 Improvement East supported seven regional networks to share best practice, prevent duplicated effort and enable joint solutions to improve efficiency and performance. All work was delivered in lin with milestones and four spin-off events have been held covering gold standard customer service, community engagement and satisfaction, a modern and diverse workforce and equality challenge evaluation With £250,000 support from Improvement East, the region’s Heads of HR and Public Sector People Managers Association (PPMA) are delivering a programme of activity to improve capacity across seven key themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Safeguarding agenda ● Apprenticeships ● Regional workforce planning ● Development of human resource leaders ● Procurement, commissioning and partnership working ● Skills development ● Talent management <p>£100,000 funding from Improvement East has established a regional network, Culture First, to share best practice, improve leaders’ skills and promote self-assessment and peer challenge in order to enable improvements in culture and sport services, which contribute to economic, well-being and community cohesion priorities. The network has agreed an action plan and launched its website.</p>

<p>Member development</p>	<p>Improvement East has led a group of regional partners to create programmes to ensure the region's future political leadership will be diverse and highly skilled.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning of the 21st Century Councillor programme is now complete. The programme will consist of two key elements to be launched after the general election: • Leadership East will engage up to 500 individuals to tackle future challenges facing the region's local authorities. • Be a Councillor Campaign - a major regional promotional campaign to encourage people to consider becoming councillors.
<p>Community empowerment</p>	<p>Working through the Regional Empowerment Partnership, Improvement East has delivered support to communications officers throughout the region – increasing their skills and their awareness of issues such as climate change and diversity. Two exchange visits to London Borough of Newham and Luton have been held for 117 practitioners to share practice on community projects taking place in these areas.</p>
<p>Economic development</p>	<p>Improvement East has put £150,000 of funding into the first year of a programme to build the economic development capacity of Members and officers and build networks for joint learning and working. Already, regional local economic development training has been run successfully, as have events on EU funding bid-writing and considerable progress has been made on Local Economic Assessments in the region.</p>
<p>Growth</p>	<p>Improvement East funded (£110,000) SHAPE East which has delivered seminars, training events, community workshops and case studies. The programme aimed to demystify planning and improve skills for building communities amongst decision-makers and community leaders. Good practice seminars, Member training events and two Making Neighbourhoods seminars were delivered.</p> <p>Improvement East put £184,000 into the Capacity for Urban Renaissance in the East of England (CURE) programme, which is trialling joint approaches to economic development, initially between the six Regional Cities East. The programme aims to deliver efficiency and service improvement targets and sustainable joint projects. Feedback from their City Seminars has been excellent and following these events RCE has been developing a menu of programmes for the cities to develop their skills.</p>