

Support for Struggling and Weak local authorities

General

The Local Government White Paper sets out a new framework for local government with greater emphasis on local government owning the improvement agenda. Therefore authorities will be given more freedom and empowerment to manage themselves and deliver the required improvements.

There is the intent that the new Performance Framework will focus on local delivery and closer partnership working.

Proposals currently in draft form and subject to national consultation, are concerned with tackling under performance. These proposals place the Government Offices at the fore front of developing improvement support or deciding upon action required in conjunction with other agencies, for local authorities in difficulty in respect of CAA inspections and LAA targets.

This protocol is designed to support the GOEM role in the region in leading in this area, and should not be viewed to be in conflict with these responsibilities.

The role of EMRIEP is to ensure an approach of continuous improvement is engendered across the region. Within this arena of improved delivery, there remain a number of councils in the region who may struggle to improve and may from time to time encounter problems either across their organisation or within specific services. Equally there are a number of councils who are aiming for excellence who whilst requiring a different focus of support will also need a range of offerings from both the partnership in their sub region and from the themed partnerships. The EMRIEP is committed to a structured approach to supporting these Councils.

Whilst there needs to be a more 'preventative' and 'early intervention' approach taken to support the weak and struggling councils through improvement and efficiency plans, there will be times when a greater level of rapidly deployed focussed support to an individual council will be necessary.

There are areas where the East Midlands Region leads the way in performance. The EMRIEP is committed to helping other regions in these areas. Similarly there are areas where other regions lead the way in performance and the EMRIEP will seek support from the regions for these areas.

In delivering this EMRIEP will take the following approach:

1. Intelligence gathering

EMRIEP is committed to ensuring that, as far as possible, it will predict potential problems and respond before they occur. In order to achieve this it needs to have an effective mechanism in place for 'intelligence gathering' which builds the picture of performance across the region and identifies 'hot spots' and growing issues

This information will come from a number of sources and though not exhaustive will include:

- Council self assessments
- Annual risk assessment
- Annual use of resources judgement
- Direction of travel statements
- CAA annual review reports
- Peer reviews
- Anecdotal information gathered from change agents
- Regional performance comparators – impacts of 'coasting' authorities.

If we are to be able to positively intervene to support local authorities we should create a confidential environment where key change agents – GOEM; IDEA; Audit Commission and the EMRIEP support team can exchange, discuss and verify information. This must be done under 'Chatham House' rules to protect and build the trust of councils.

Additionally we may be approached by individual councils with weak ratings to support them deliver improvement and we must have a clearly articulated offering of support.

2. Offer of support

Once an area of concern has been identified there can sometimes be a delay in mobilising effective action because the various strands of support have to be identified and pulled together. Additionally the local authority concerned will currently have to approach a number of change agents and no coherent support plan exists. This is neither efficient nor effective.

To counter this EMRIEP should maximise the existing support available from all change agents and have a picture across the region of:

- What resources and skills sets are available and from whom;
- What is the extent of the available support capacity
- Who are the 'experts' who can provide 'best fit' advice
- What can each expert offer and who is best placed to provide effective support:
 - IDeA on improvement;
 - EMRIEP on service improvement themes e.g. Waste

- Externalised support from 'Excellent Council' teams
- o How they can be mobilised quickly
- o Which change agents have the expertise to 'lead' with the authority
- o What role will the requesting council play
- o Identify gaps in offerings and commission tailored support solutions.

This will allow the EMRIEP to maintain a matrix of problem types mapped against support to resolve them. Some of these resources will be free at the point of delivery and some will require EMRIEP to set aside resources.

The role of the nominated Improvement Adviser to the Members Steering Group and the Officer Board will be:

- o Where there is resource mobilised from more than one provider, to oversee the development of the plan that coordinates the resources deployed.

The role of the EMRIEP Chatham House Group will be to:

- o Review support plans for authorities and suggest any improvements to them.

The role of EMRIEP support team will be:

- o Collectively commission a region wide range of support options for 'critical' issues
- o Placing call off arrangements to allow sub regions to quickly and simply commission support
- o Ensuring that no conflict of interest arises for regional bodies who are commissioned to provide support.

The role of the EMRIEP sub regional partnerships will be:

- o The first port of call in their area for any authority seeking assistance and
- o Play the key role of commissioning appropriate support.

The support available should be designed to address a number of key issues:

- o An individual authority has reached organisational crisis point
- o Failure on critical success factors, such as use of resources or poor commissioning skills
- o Service specific issue – for example waste disposal facility not in place
- o Authorities who are identified as 'coasting' with no demonstrable year on year improvement
- o Providing a challenge to all authorities, not to let problems fester but be willing to seek support
- o Be of equal benefit to authorities who are moving towards excellence.

3. Principles Underpinning the Offer of Support

EMRIEP will deliver this support within a core set of principles and values:

- Role will not be as regulator and not interventionist
- Responsibility to look at best practice and share soft information
- Duty to cooperate / cross sector
- Build trust and willingness to collaborate
- Engender a culture of help / care and help other sectors to engage
- Partners in the EMRIEP acknowledge and accept they have a responsibility to seek support when they are struggling
- Partners will make capacity to participate.

4. Approach

A plan of action should be built with the authority to

- Produce an evidence based diagnosis of the problems
- Identify the nature of the problems – financial; capacity; capability; political
- Identify potential solutions
- Mobilise the ‘experts’
- Support the creation of an internal team to help deliver the change and imbed improvement
- Identify resources to deliver the plan.

5. Prevention

Taking a preventative approach EMRIEP should ensure that the sub regional partnerships have built into their plans programmes of work which strengthen authorities in key areas such as:

- Leadership and change management
- Member development
- Mentoring and buddy schemes for key managers
- Knowledge and advice on best practice
- Projects to mobilise best practice where most needed
- Efficiency strands which reduce financial burdens.

6. Delivery Models and Budgetary Requirements

Key Components of the support will include:

- Intelligence database
- Matrix of support against key needs and matched support
- Fully costed menu of services
- Access route to support – technology and people

- Change agent group
- Communications model.

Next Steps During 2008/09

1. Discovery stage for 2008/09:

- Create a matrix of the type of possible events that will require reactive improvement support against the Regional Change Agents and peer authorities that can give support (and the form that support takes)
- Discuss with IDeA and other partnerships the opportunities to strengthen existing cross regional collaboration
- Ensure prevention agenda is built into each EMRIEP partnership and sub regional partnerships
- Ensure the role and the capacity to commission reactive support is built into partnership plans
- Ensure planned process is CAA compliant
- Identify what approaches being taken in other regions
- Test the idea with weak authorities in the region to understand how support could be optimised
- Make recommendations to the EMRIEP Member Steering Group and Officer Board and agree funding stream to support planning phase.

2. Planning and delivery stage:

- Establish project team
- Build the 'Intelligence Database'
- Identify key strands of expertise; dynamic and innovative solutions currently operational in East Midlands and elsewhere
- Deliver clear offering of 'what's possible'
- Build capacity to deliver
- Create a funding stream within the overall EMRIEP business plan.

3. Budget implications

Within the indicative budget for the EMRIES a contingency sum of c£200k has been established to support this work during 2008/09.

It will be incumbent on EMRIEP Steering Group to approve an annual business plan and budget which should contain an element to support struggling and weak councils, it is suggested this should not be more than 5% of the total annual budget.

Indicative Allocation of Resources Subject to Further Consultation Within the Region		£'000s
Programme Area		
BPI	We will continue to support and provide resources for process reengineering and delivery of shared services.	130
BPI	We will support business transformation projects that lead to increased customer focus and improved customer outcomes (lean systems approach).	390
BPI	We will continue to support the business improvement skills development programme to enable local authorities to develop a sustainable capacity.	20
BPI	We will provide a regional capacity to advise, promote and support local authorities BPI activities.	50
BPI	We will promote the CLG national business process information toolkit and best practice examples	20
Total		610
Smarter Procurement	We will deliver the key activities contained within the Procurement 2012 strategy now endorsed by all councils in the region.	
Smarter Procurement	We will provide support to analyse KPI, savings data, case studies, best practice dissemination workshops, facilitate group meetings	50
Smarter Procurement	We will provide support for a regional resource to deliver the regional initiatives programme, the best deals comparison service, maintain contract database and community web site	180
Smarter Procurement	We will develop a training & skills programme on a regional basis which can then be assessed by sub regional groups.	100
Smarter Procurement	We will continue to support cluster development	60
Smarter Procurement	We recognise the importance of sustainability and support the statement issued by the RIEP Chief Executives Task Group and will provide support to facilitate delivery	100
Total		490
Asset management	We will continue and further develop a programme of capturing and communicating best practice and strategic guidance for local authorities.	50
Asset management	We will continue to support our Highways Alliance work which has generated significant buy in from around the region, will continue to address the re thinking construction agenda and achieve significant improvements in design, commissioning and asset management.	50

Indicative Allocation of Resources Subject to Further Consultation Within the Region		£'000s
Programme Area		
Asset management	We will continue to support our East Midlands Property Alliance work which has generated significant buy in from around the region, will continue to address the re thinking construction agenda and achieve significant improvements in design, commissioning and asset management.	150
Total		250
Waste	We will continue to encourage and support our Waste Management networks to develop regional solutions to pressing service delivery problems and efficiency needs which transcend local authority boundaries.	200
Waste	We will provide a regional capacity to advise, promote and support local authorities Waste activities.	70
Total		270
Care Services	We will continue to encourage and support our Adult Services networks to develop regional solutions to pressing service delivery problems and efficiency needs which transcend local authority boundaries	160
Care Services	We will provide a regional capacity to advise, promote and support local authorities Adult & Children's Care activities	70
Care Services	We will continue to encourage and support Children's Services networks to develop regional solutions to pressing service delivery problems and efficiency needs which transcend local authority boundaries.	150
Total		380
Innovation& transformation	We support the development of a consistent and effective regime of generating investment cycles through a process of `banking and re using` efficiency gains.	10
Innovation& transformation	Invest to save fund.	1,000
Innovation& transformation	Change management development programmes.	25
Innovation& transformation	We will support the development of common standards for ICT systems to enable exchange of information and providing a platform for sharing of services.	50
Innovation& transformation	We will promote examples of best practice.	10

Indicative Allocation of Resources Subject to Further Consultation Within the Region		£'000s
Programme Area		
Total		1,095
Capacity Building	We will support the promotion of the leadership academy programme.	50
Capacity Building	We will support member development and mentoring programmes.	200
Capacity Building	Exploiting the national graduate programme.	50
Capacity Building	We will invest in workforce development to address known skill shortages	180
Capacity Building	We will continue to invest in programme and project management development skills as a route to manage change effectively and deliver improvements on time and within budget.	70
Capacity Building	We will develop the culture where authorities swap short sharp 'one hit' bursts of high level skills to address a specific problem area.	90
Total		640
Driving Improvement of authorities	We support Peer challenges to ensure authorities are equipped to meet the requirements of the CAA regime.	70
Driving Improvement of authorities	Innovation coaching.	50
Driving Improvement of authorities	We will continue with the programme already supported at a regional level with our existing resources, on a range of activities which support the implementation of the workforce strategy.	50
Total		170
Better outcomes for people	Activities to promote excellence in leadership within our local authorities and communities, including; peer challenge to shape and drive through our LAA and MAA stretch targets.	225
Better outcomes for people	Partnership skills training.	100
Better outcomes for people	Diagnostic work to assist our place shaping role through:	
Better outcomes for people	(i) customer segmentation and use of customer insight through our consultative arrangements	125

Indicative Allocation of Resources Subject to Further Consultation Within the Region		£'000s
Programme Area		
Better outcomes for people	(ii) deep performance benchmarking and analysis of expenditure over the major service blocks of Adult Care, Children's Services, Environmental Services to aid our approach to commission excellence in service delivery.	100
	Total	550
	Support for struggling authorities	236
	Contingency	385
	Sub total	5,076
	Projects already allocated (CLG windfall)	1,161
	TOTAL	6,237
	Funds Available	6,237

EMRIEP– Risk Analysis Criteria

IMPACT	High (9)	Important risks – may potentially affect provision of key services or duties 7	Key risk – may potentially affect provision of key services or duties 8	Immediate action needed – serious threat to provision and/or achievement of key services or duties 9
		Monitor as necessary – less important but still could have a serious effect on the provision of key services or duties 4	Monitor as necessary – less important but could still have a serious effect on the provision of key services or duties 5	Key risks – may potentially affect provision of key services or duties 6
	Low (1)	No action necessary 1	Monitor as necessary – ensure being properly managed 2	Monitor as necessary – less important but still could have a serious effect on the provision of key services or duties 3
		LIKELIHOOD		
		High		low

EMRIEP– Risk Analysis Criteria

Risk	Risk Description	Inherent Risk	Risk Owner	Risk Management Solution	Key controls	Residual Risk	Risk Indicators
	KEY RISKS						
1	Failure to agree regional governance arrangements and support structure for EMRIEP	9	EMRIEP + LAs	Resolve by negotiation	LGA intervention/consultation	3	Report to the EMRIEP Steering Group
2	Local authority buy in not achieved for the EMRIES and overall programme	8	EMRIEP + LAs	Consultation and strings attached to resource allocation	Consultation	3	Report to the EMRIEP Steering Group
3	Failure to establish 5 robust sub regional partnerships to deliver significant elements of the EMRIES programme	7	EMRIEP + LAs	Resolve by negotiations and resource allocations	Consultation	3	Report to the EMRIEP Steering Group
4	Sub regional partnerships fail to implement programmes, provide oversight of LSPs & LAA delivery	7	EMRIEP + LAs	Resolve by negotiations and resource allocations	Consultation	2	Report to the EMRIEP Steering Group
5	Failure to secure support from other partners to implement EMRIES programmes	4	EMRIEP + LAs + Partners	Resolve through joint working and collaboration over programmes	Consultation with EMRIEP steering group and appropriate action	2	Report to the EMRIEP Steering Group
6	Failure to deliver regional and sub regional programmes and therefore make best use of resources delegated from the Government	5	EMRIEP + LAs + Partners	Resolve through joint working and collaboration over programmes	Consultation with EMRIEP Steering Group and appropriate action	3	Early warning system of information gathering
7	Performance of EMRIEP in terms of leadership and management of the programmes of investment deficient	6	EMRIEP + LAs + Partners	Reflection on decisions taken and implementation track record	Reports to the EMRIEP Steering Group	2	Programme management reporting