**Draft letter from John Healey and David Parsons to RIEP Chairs**

It is pleasing to see that nine months into the programme RIEPs are making good progress in addressing the challenging objectives they set themselves in their regional improvement and efficiency strategies (RIESs).

We must now start to look for evidence of innovation, efficiency and political leadership which demonstrate that the investment in the RIEPs is bearing fruit and delivering real improvement to local authority services. In particular, evidence of cashable efficiency savings are essential in order to meet new service pressures, such as those resulting from the economic downturn.

We have been discussing how we might best capture the progress that RIEPs are making to give the reassurance to key stakeholders and government that RIEPs should remain as a key regional hub for delivering sector led improvement. We believe that this reassurance can be provided in the following ways;

- By RIEP Boards' receiving regular reports on progress in meeting the key objectives contained in their RIESs.

- For evidence of RIEP progress to date, including efficiency savings to be reported through the Chief Executives' Task Group (next meeting on 11 February 2008), the RIEP Member Forum and LGA Improvement Board.

- Through the sharing of learning and good practice through the established knowledge sharing networks such as the IDeA's partnerships and places library, Communities of Practice and websites.

- Through the production of RIEP annual reports, as outlined in the NIES, which show progress against objectives in RIESs. 2008-09 reports should be produced in draft by mid March 2009 for endorsement by LGA lead members and Ministers. This will enable us to ensure the timely release of RIEP funding for 2009-10 and 2010-11.

- Through the production of a "state of the nation" report that will provide evidence of the success of a sector led approach to improvement involving councils themselves, the RIEP's and the sector's national architecture such as the IDeA.