

Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships

Summary

This paper provides Members with a summary of recent progress and activity across the nine RIEPs, including an update on the devolution of the Efficiency and Transformation fund, on outcomes from the last RIEP Member Forum, on the process for securing the release of year three funds to the RIEPs and on progress in taking forward support for smarter procurement.

Recommendations

This report is for information.

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Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships

Background

The National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy (NIES) recognises the effectiveness of a sector led approach to improvement and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs) are a core part of this model. Both RIEP and Improvement Board members have previously agreed the importance of the RIEPs providing regular updates to reassure key stakeholders of their progress and to share good practice across the regions.

1. Key messages arising from RIEP progress updates:

The following provides a summary of the key messages from the most recent set of quarterly updates. The quarterly updates are available in full on request.

Efficiency

All RIEPs have increased their focus on supporting local authorities to promote and accelerate efficiency gains, with many looking ahead to a tighter fiscal climate ahead. Many RIEPs have built on the figures they reported at year end with some impressive efficiency savings reported in the second quarter:

- Gross cashable savings reported by the South East from April 08 September 09 are £27.9m, of which £6.9m has been reported in 2009-10 alone. This includes savings on waste and efficiencies from construction
- The West Midlands reports £9.5m savings from the start of CSR07 to June 2009 from its smarter procurement programme
- As at September, the East Midlands had released £3.2m from the Midlands Highways Alliance and £6.1m cashable savings from its Property Alliance as well as bringing new projects online in social care procurement.

Performance improvement

A recent analysis of the RIEP delivery plans indicated that RIEPs consistently invest around 50% of their funding in providing support to deliver ambitious LAAs, strengthening partnership working, offering bespoke support to individual authorities and preparing the sector for Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). Examples of notable improvement support include:

- 'Picnic' support menu in the East enabling all authorities to access a variety of support of up to £10K
- A considerable investment in organisational development and partnership working in the North East (including the NE Excellent Manager Programme)

- Launch of regional support programme prioritising partnerships and support for CAA and Multi Area Agreements (MAAs) in the North West.

Key achievements in the last quarter (June to Sept 09)

In this set of quarterly reports, each RIEP provided a key achievement which they had delivered in the last quarter:

- In the **South West**, the partnership allocated £1.75m funding to ensure all sub-regions have access to support for **sector led 'Total Place' style pilots**
- The **North West** agreed a further package of support to an authority in difficulty to be funded from the savings released by the authority engaging with the RIEP in year one
- **Improvement East** launched an **efficiency package** including a new procurement hub, an overpayments recovery scheme and an invest to save scheme which offers authorities cash injections to pump prime efficiency projects
- Leader and Chief Executive support established across **Yorkshire and Humber** for a long term, regional, sector led **Improvement Framework**
- The launch of an ambitious **recruitment and retention programme** worth £1.5m in the **North East**
- In the **West Midlands**, the introduction of a £20K **support package for district councils in the recession** aimed at value for money, transformation or procurement
- The **London Procurement Strategy** setting out how **Capital Ambition** will support collaborative procurement across the capital
- In the **South East**, a new approach to **sub-regional funding** and revised **governance** with every board member being elected by their peers
- Refreshed **highways alliance project** in **East Midlands** now projecting £32.9m efficiencies over 5 years.

2. Efficiency and transformation (E and T) fund:

The E and T fund is a capital fund totalling £115m over three years. CLG has confirmed that the E and T allocation for 2009-10 will be devolved to the RIEPs to support projects on customer led transformation, efficiency, and system innovation (including a focus on preventative services). At the Solace Conference on 22nd October, Rosie Winterton announced that the total funds to be devolved for 2009-10 are £31.7m.

The latest quarterly progress updates included a specific update on how each RIEP is making use of their E and T allocation for 2008-9. Projects of note include:

- Six boroughs working together as a 'Service Transformation Academy' to improve business processes in London Boroughs

24 November 2009

- A regional e-recruitment system for Fire and Rescue Services being developed in the South West
- Support to improve access to health and well being services in Yorkshire and Humber.

3. RIEP Member Forum

Another successful meeting of the RIEP Member Forum was held on 13th October with a focus on sharing the RIEPs' most effective efficiency projects. A decision was taken to produce a casefile setting out the RIEP efficiency and procurement offer. A draft of which will be available for Members to review at the next meeting. We expect the Minister to attend the next meeting on 13th January, and IDeA national and regional peers will also be invited to build and consolidate links with lead peers.

4. Sign off of year three funds

Due to the timing of the general election next year, it is necessary to bring forward the process whereby the RIEPs submit 'annual reports' to the Minister and LGA lead Members to secure the release of funding for year three. Each RIEP will now produce an interim, 'light touch' report by January which will be collated by the RIEP Programme Office. We are in the process of arranging a Ministerial meeting in late January 2010 for lead Members and the Minister to discuss the progress evidenced in these 'interim' reports, with a view to agreeing the release of funding for year three in a timely manner.

5. Procurement support

At its meeting in July, the Improvement Board commissioned a series of Guides on Procurement to be circulated to all elected Members. To date, Guides on Professional Services, Energy, ICT and Construction have been produced and circulated widely in First Magazine. The distribution of a Guide on Waste is due in First on 28th November, followed by the final Guide on Adult Social Care. Feedback on the Guides has been positive and Members may wish to consider commissioning a further set in the new year.

The Member Guides will be complemented by the production of a casefile setting out the RIEPs' offer of support on efficiency and procurement.

The IDeA's procurement programme has been commissioned and will include:

- Refresh of Member and Senior Manager pocket guides
- Councillors' workshops on 'Procurement in hard times'
- Procurement Challenge and tailored support for authorities
- Procurement "Champions" Conference
- Development of the online efficiency exchange

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Implications for Wales

There are no implications for Wales.

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