



East of England
Local Government Association

Business Plan

2015/18

(2.0 Updated in April 2016)

Improving the East

1. Introduction and objectives

The East of England LGA is a politically-led, cross party organisation which works on behalf of the 52 local councils in the East of England to harness their collective strength to shape and serve their communities and localities. It is a voluntary body funded by subscription.

Our organisational objectives are to be:

- a provider of innovative solutions and a catalyst for collaborative working; bringing together partners to harness their collective strength and knowledge.
- a highly respected and influential advocate for our members; promoting their leadership of their locality, as well as fighting for them to get the resources, powers and freedoms necessary to perform that role successfully.
- an invaluable resource of specialist expertise and capacity; providing advice and support to councils on key issues.

The business plan sets out the over-arching themes for the year that set all of our work into context. It describes the ways in which the East of England LGA will work with its member councils and partners.

It is intended that this plan will be reviewed and refreshed as part of the annual review of the Association.

2. Context

The East of England LGA 2015-2018 business plan comes at a time of tough and complex pressures on the sector and it must continue to undertake its role against the backdrop of these challenges:

- The prolonged austerity ensures that local councils will need to go beyond efficiencies and look to redefine their role and purpose in order to secure outcomes for communities.
- In post-Scottish referendum Britain, there are strong calls by local government in England for more devolved power in the form of further decentralisation, financial freedoms and local responsibility for strategically important matters such as local taxation, skills and infrastructure. The devolution debate is complex, and poses both opportunities and risks for our member councils.
- The business plan comes at an interesting time for EU-UK. The referendum on whether the UK should remain a member of the European Union will take place on the 23 June 2016 and the activity of the Association will be reviewed to reflect the outcome of the referendum.
- With the UK's economic outlook improving, making the case for growth will be crucial if local councils are to fulfil their potential.
- Local councils are seeing a generational challenge of rising demand and declining resources. If new and innovative solutions are not found, there is a risk of both serious public service failure and of individual councils becoming financially unsustainable.

3. Themes for 2015-2018

In addressing the contextual challenges outlined above our core subscription offer will focus on five priority themes: Cross-Cutting Areas, Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Health; Economic Development and Growth; Europe; and Resources (including Employers' Services).

Cross Cutting Areas

- Ensure councils are self-aware and ensure that any councils or services facing difficulty are supported by the sector.
- Councils develop new and better ways of working to meet current and future challenges to service delivery.
- Enable councils to shape the views of Ministers and partners and are recognised nationally for the work they do.
- Councils understand, influence and make the most of partner bodies, such as the Local Government Association (LGA).
- Use all opportunities to promote the work of East of England councils and to collectively demonstrate councils' leadership role and new ways of working in key areas.
- Councils are able to shape the local debate around devolution and localism.

Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Health

- Support our members in the high-cost areas of adult and children's services, to share good practice, prevent duplication and provide peer support.
- Ensure our members are supported through a programme of self-regulation to prevent external intervention or service failure.
- Coordinate external activity to ensure that the East of England makes the most of divested national programmes and funding.

Economic Development and Growth

- Support our members and their partners with growth and developing more competitive local economies through collaborative working and champion the central role of local councils in economic growth.
- Support our members in meeting new and existing housing pressures.
- Support our members to tackle environment and waste challenges.
- Local councils and their partners in Local Enterprise Partnerships have access to helpful economic and population data.

Europe

- Local councils and their partners understand and influence European policy.
- The East of England benefits from an increasing level of European funding.
- Maintain and develop effective working relationships with MEPs and Committee of the Regions Members, providing advice and briefings as appropriate.

Resources

- Enable our members to realise savings through supporting innovative efficiency and service re-design programmes.
- Expert and independent employers' advice and support is provided to councils when necessary, and councils have constructive relationships with regional trade union bodies and influence national terms and conditions.
- Councils have an intelligent approach to procurement.
- Councils work together to meet the financial challenges facing the sector by learning from each other, new and innovative ways of working and using their collective power to influence national policy.

4. Talent Bank

Our Talent Bank has been developed to support our subscription offer, outlined above, by providing additional in-depth support in priority areas. It enables councils to draw upon specialist expertise and additional capacity from a pool of quality associates.

This is a paid-for service with associates provided on a flexible day-to-day rate, or project package basis and is part of our strategy to increase the sustainability of the East of England LGA. This adds value to our overall offer and keeps subscription costs down by providing opportunities to generate income.

The areas supported by the Talent Bank are:

Asset Management and Housing

The asset management and housing service helps councils to optimise their occupation and use of property assets, maximise financial and service benefits, and supports them to address the range of housing challenges that they face through research, market analysis, forecasting of future service demand and the development of appropriate local solutions.

Commercialisation

The commercialisation service enables councils to assess the various options they could have for generating income through the establishment of new or improved trading models, as well as through the development a more commercial attitude and culture. It also supports them to develop and implement these new models of working.

Public Service Reform

The service is there to support councils and their wider systems develop new ways of working to meet the challenges of a prolonged austerity to go beyond efficiencies and look to redefine their role and purpose in order to secure better outcomes for communities.

Human Resources (HR) and Organisational Development (OD) Services

The service delivers HR and OD advice and support on-site to individual and groups of councils, ranging from major restructures to bespoke training programmes.

Procurement Services

The Procurement Service provides a range of support to help councils in this area including our well-respected training programme and our "Procurement Challenge" process.

5. The way we work

The way we work is supported by the following set of principles:

- We are a cross-party, politically led organisation with our members at the heart of decision making and development.
- We harness the expertise, experience and resources of our member councils
- We seek new opportunities for extending and strengthening the influence of councils.
- We work in partnership with the national Local Government Association and seek mutually to reinforce our respective work on local government's overall behalf.
- We recognise the different spatial levels that councils operate at, individually, at county and LEP level and regionally, for different objectives and purposes.
- We work across the public sector to support integrated working.
- We focus on the delivery of activities that offer good value for money and are effective.

6. Governance and staffing

The 52 local councils in the East of England are all members of East of England LGA. The organisation is governed by the Leader or elected Mayor of each of the 52 councils in the region. The full assembly of the 52 leaders meets twice a year. This is a forum for discussion on common issues, but importantly provides a platform for all leaders to meet and hear from Ministers and other policy makers on key issues.

Day to day management is provided by a management committee of five Leaders who are representative of the political proportionality of the region. A smaller Chief Executive's group also comes together quarterly to bring together the county and unitary councils plus one representative from each district area to tackle the strategic issues facing councils across the East of England. A series of networks also bring together the Lead Members around the key priority areas who come together to share experience and work collaboratively by thematic area. These networks are also supported by officer groups.

A structure chart is included as Appendix A.

The organisation is staffed by a small core of highly experienced and committed officers. Additionally, member councils can draw upon specialist expertise from the existing associate pool of high quality associates in the East of England LGA Talent Bank.

7. Communications and advocacy

The Business Plan is underpinned by a strong communications, marketing and advocacy strategy which assist us to:

- Provide two way communication between the East of England LGA and our member councils to ensure that the support we provide is relevant and appropriate
- Ensure awareness and understanding amongst our member councils of the role, services and added value of the East of England LGA
- Be an influential advocate and to enhance the reputation of local government in the East of England for innovation, achievement, independence and resilience

- Enable the sharing of knowledge, ideas and good practice
- Continue to work with partners, including the Local Government Association, to collaborate on issue led campaigns and to strengthen the voice of local government.

8. Delivery

The business plan is supported by a detailed Action Plan outlining intended outcomes, activities, responsibilities, timescales and resources, providing a framework for monitoring and evaluating progress against key priorities and objectives.

Progress against the action plan will be reported to the East of England LGA Management Committee on a quarterly basis. The action plan will be reviewed annually, alongside the Business Plan.

ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

