

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet
AUTHOR: Chief Executive

8 June 2006

CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT (LAA)

Purpose

1. The Cambridgeshire Local Area Agreement is a three-year agreement struck between the Government, Cambridgeshire County Council and its partners. The LAA sets out agreed targets which a wide range of partners will work together to achieve in order to improve the quality of life in the county. Those targets reflect national and local priorities and have strong links to community strategies.
2. This Council and the South Cambs LSP have been involved in drawing up the final agreement. The agreement has been agreed and signed off by the Government. A copy of the document can be found on:-
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/partnerships/lsp/
3. The purpose of this report is to outline the scope of the LAA and its implications for this Council and to request the Cabinet to approve the LAA and the arrangements for the Council's future involvement in delivering and developing the LAA.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

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| 4. | Quality, Accessible Services | The LAA has been drawn up from the five community strategies in the county. It strongly supports the Council's partnership objective and a number of other elements of the Council's Corporate Objectives. |
| | Village Life | |
| | Sustainability | |
| | Partnership | |

What is in the LAA?

5. The LAA includes **three year targets for a range of services**. The targets in the LAA are arranged under four blocks. These blocks and the targets which will have most implications for the Council are given in the **Appendix**. There is still considerable work to be undertaken to identify clearly how responsibility for achieving the targets will be divided between the partners.
6. Some of the targets are defined as "**LAA stretch targets**" where the partners will receive "reward money" from the government if the targets are achieved by the end of the 2006/07 year. These were previously known as LPSA (Local Public Service Agreement) targets. Potentially, up to £12m of reward money may be earned. It has been decided that the reward money will be divided between the five local strategic partnerships (LSPs) in the county. The stretch targets cover such issues as:-
 - Street Cleaning
 - Road Accidents
 - Bus Use
 - Minimising waste going to landfill

- Improving the independence and quality of life of older people
- Improving school attainment
- Reducing illegal drug use
- Reducing smoking and increasing smoke-free environments
- Reducing anti-social behaviour.

7. **Partnership arrangements for implementing the targets.** The LAA will be driven largely by:-

- **The LAA Board.** A county wide high-level board of 12 members to give overall direction to the LAA. The board includes one representative from each district who is also a member of the LSP Board. The LAA Board had its first meeting on 9th May, with Cllr Kindersley representing the South Cambs LSP.
- **A LAA Reference Group.** A primarily officer group which advises the Board and co-ordinates the development and implementation of the LAA.
- **The five district LSPs.** Guidance provided by the government envisages that local authorities and local strategic partnerships will have a key role in the development and implementation of LAAs. In Cambridgeshire the LAA was signed off by the chairs of LSPs. LSPs also have an important role in the achievement of the LAA Stretch targets and the investment of the reward grant.

8. **Performance management arrangements.** The implementation of the LAA will include quarterly reporting of progress on LAA targets to enable the LAA Board, Reference Group and partners to address areas where targets may not be met. There will also be six monthly meetings with the regional government office (Go-East) to assess progress and roll forward the agreement.

The future development of the LAA

9. It is planned that LAAs should be “refreshed” and rolled forward annually, with a more major review every three years. It was very challenging to prepare and agree the LAA in time for it to become operative by 1st April 2006. As a result the LAA focuses to a large extent on targets or outcomes drawn from existing plans or strategies or from the LPSA. There are a number of important areas which the LAA does not yet address, but which will be worked up and included in the first annual “refresh” of the agreement. These areas to be addressed, included as aspirations in the LAA, include:

- (a) Growth areas
- (b) Social Inclusion and Community Cohesion
- (c) Health
- (d) Affordable Housing
- (e) Transport and Access
- (f) Sustainable new communities; mitigating and adapting to Climate Change
- (g) Economic Development
- (h) The impact and opportunities of the 2012 Olympics

10. Over the next few months the LAA Reference Group and the LAA Board will be working up targets for these areas. It will be important for this Council and the South Cambs LSP to seek to influence the direction of these considerations.

11. Earlier in the year the Government issued a consultation paper: *Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their Future*. This paper makes it clear that the Government sees LSPs, LAAs and Community Strategies as an important element of the future framework within which local government will operate.

Implications for the Council

12. It is essential for the Council to be engaged with the LAA and it will probably be central to the realisation of the Council's aspirations in areas such as the growth areas and affordable housing.
13. Another important aspect of the LAA mechanism is that it allows local authorities a certain amount of freedom in the allocation of government funding in order to meet the priorities of the LAA. The current Cambridgeshire LAA does not recommend any diversion of funding streams. However, in future refreshes of the LAA it is likely that there will be consideration of diverting of funding streams (such as those for health or crime and disorder) to projects or areas of the county seen as priorities.
14. The Council has already begun to integrate the LAA within its systems:-
 - At an earlier meeting the Cabinet agreed to include the LAA as the portfolio responsibility of the Leader of the Council.
 - Services have included in their service plans for 2006/07 actions to achieve the LAA stretch targets. Those actions are reflected in the draft Performance Plan.
 - An LAA officer group has been formed to brief our representatives on the LAA Reference Group and LAA Board and more generally to improve understanding and links between the Council and the LAA.
15. Work will continue to identify how the Council can contribute to other (non-stretch) targets in the LAA and to reflect this in Council strategies and programmes.
16. As mentioned above, it is envisaged that the LSP will play an important part in developing and ensuring the delivery of the LAA. The South Cambs LSP Board is aware that at present it does not have the officer capacity to address this successfully and is currently considering how it can address this issue – for example by the use of the reward money from LAA stretch targets and by seeking capacity building resources from regional funds.
17. The future financial and staffing implications for the Council are currently unclear and will depend on the outcome paragraphs 15 and 16, and the future considerations of the LAA Board. It will be necessary for the Council and the South Cambs LSP to be realistic about any commitments taken on in the current resource position.

Risk Management Implications

18. The major risk to the Council is of not being sufficiently involved in the LAA process and influencing the decision making process.

Recommendations

19. Cabinet is recommended to:
- a) Sign up to the agreed LAA, subject to further clarification of the Council's contribution to LAA targets and resource availability,
 - b) Advise the South Cambs LSP Board to appoint the Leader of the Council as the South Cambs representative on the LAA Board, and
 - c) Request the Leader and the officers to continue to represent the interests of the Council and the LSP in the development of the LAA; to improve the awareness of the LAA within the Council; and to report progress back to the Cabinet as required.

Background Papers: no additional documents were used in the preparation of this report

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