

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet

10 November 2005

AUTHOR: Chief Executive

LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS (LAAs)

Purpose

1. Cambridgeshire County Council has been accepted as a Round 2 pilot authority for the development of an LAA. The agreement will run from April 2006. The purpose of this report is to inform the Cabinet about Local Area Agreements and the implications for this Council.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

2.

Quality, Accessible Services	LAAs provide a mechanism by which the Council can progress its objectives more effectively working in partnership with others, but it will be necessary for the Council's input into the process to be sufficiently focused and resourced to ensure benefits for South Cambs.
Village Life	
Sustainability	
Partnership	

About Local Area Agreements (LAAs)

3. A LAA is a three year agreement between central government and a local authority and its partners setting out clear objectives to be achieved in that three year period and how funding streams will be allocated to the achievement of those objectives.
4. Some important aspects of LAAs are given below. They should -
 - a) Be taken forward by local authorities, local strategic partnerships and other key partners at local level. For example, representatives of the voluntary sector, businesses and parish councils should be involved.
 - b) Set out outcomes, supported by indicators and targets. The outcomes should reflect national priorities and local priorities, as expressed in community strategies.
 - c) Be based around four blocks:-
 - Children and Young People
 - Safer and Stronger Communities
 - Healthier Communities and Older People
 - Economic Development and Enterprise

However, this is not intended to be prescriptive and LAAs may cover any relevant issues. Examples given by the guidance include: transport, sport and culture, rural areas, environment and housing growth.

- d) Include arrangements for performance management by the partners involved to ensure that the outcomes in the agreement are achieved.

- e) Be negotiated with the regional Government Office. Once agreed, there will be arrangements for regular meetings with the regional office to refresh the LAA and review performance.
5. The government intends that LAAs will be completed with all local authorities (ie with all county councils in shire areas) from April 2007. LAAs will be increasingly integrated with CPA and the successor to CPA. As stated in the guidance: "In the longer term, we want to continue to develop the policy so that LAAs become one of the key means by which central government communicates with local areas."
 6. Local Public Service Agreements (LPSAs) with their pump priming and reward grant mechanisms will be included within LAAs and be known as the "reward element" of the LAA. There will be no additional financial reward from LAAs. The main benefits of LAAs are that they provide:-
 - a) a high level framework for partners to work together to address national priorities and important local issues;
 - b) greater flexibility in the use of funding streams;
 - c) certain freedoms and flexibilities;
 - d) a reduction in the level of monitoring and bureaucracy from central government departments.

How the Cambridgeshire LAA is being progressed

7. The County Council is taking the lead in progressing the LAA for Cambridgeshire, but it is working primarily through:-
 - a) the Chief Executives Liaison Group (CELG)
 - b) the LAA Reference Group – an officer group comprising representatives from LSPs and appropriate other organisations.
8. The timetable requires the LAA to be negotiated with the government regional office by February 2006 and signed off by March 2006. This is a very tight timetable, made even more difficult in Cambridgeshire because there is not one overall County-wide LSP, but one LSP for each district. Consideration is being given to establishing a high level county-wide group or LAA Board to steer and agree the development of the LAA. The Board would have representatives from the five LSPs, the County Council, Police, Health, Voluntary Sector and business.
9. A project plan and timetable has been agreed which allows for consultation and involvement of stakeholders and agreement by LSPs. A vision and objectives, drawn from community strategies in the county, has already been agreed and an initial draft of the LAA has already been submitted to Go-East.

Implications for South Cambs

10. LAAs are very much part of the future relationship between central government and local government and will involve a high degree of partnership work. There is scope to influence how the major funding streams to other organisations can be used to benefit the residents of South Cambs.
11. Increasingly, the work and priorities of the council will need to reflect LAA targets. The plans and funding streams of existing partnerships, for example Crime and Reduction partnerships and growth areas partnerships, will form a part of the LAA. As a consequence resources could be diverted either to or from this district.

12. LSPs will play a major role in the development, implementation and monitoring of LAA targets. Support and development of the LSP and its links with the Council will continue to be important.

Implications/Risks

13. In resource terms, this is another government initiative which will impose additional requirements on officer time in services which have already been depleted in response to capping. However, if the Council does not participate in the development of the LAA, potential opportunities will be lost to benefit the residents of South Cambridgeshire. The risks are that funding streams might be allocated in ways which adversely affect South Cambridgeshire; that the potential of the LAA to make significant quality of life improvements in South Cambs are not realised; and that the quality of our contribution to the LAA will affect our future CPA score.
14. Over the next few months it will be important for the Council to be able to respond quickly as drafts of the LAA have to be agreed within very short timescales. It is recommended that Cabinet nominate one Member to take the lead on behalf of this Council for LAA development, with authority to approve drafts of the LAA on behalf of this council. In view of the cross cutting nature of the LAA, it is recommended that the Leader of the Council be nominated for this role.

Recommendations

15. Cabinet Members are recommended to:-
 - (a) note this report and request further updates.
 - (b) agree that the Leader of the Council should have portfolio holder responsibility for this Council's involvement in the development and implementation of the LAA and recommend the Council to give the Leader authority to approve drafts of the LAA on behalf of the Council (in consultation with other portfolio holders where practicable), where it is not possible to refer the matter to Cabinet and Council in the time available.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Government guidance on ODPM website
- County Council report to the Cambridgeshire Councils Association on 19.9.05
- LAA Outline timetable

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