

ESSEX LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report details the latest version of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) for Essex, for Member consideration and endorsement. The District Council is being asked to be a signatory to the document and to help deliver those targets within the Agreement where the Council can make an impact.
- 1.2 Also attached is a copy of the latest draft of the County's Children and Young People's Plan. This embodies the LAA priorities relating to children and young people and also reflects the full range of actions planned by the County's Children and Young People's Partnership within the framework of the Childrens Act. District Council support is sought for the relevant actions within that plan.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 As was reported to Members in October, Local Area Agreements are seen by Government as a new way of working, aimed at building a more flexible and responsive relationship between Central Government and a locality on specific local priority outcomes.
- 2.2 The key elements of such agreements include :-
- Negotiating between Central Government and the wider public sector at local level, including local units of Central Government.
 - Agreeing target outcomes around the four blocks of
 - Children and young people
 - Safer and stronger communities
 - Healthier communities and older people
 - Economic development
 - Simplifying funding streams by selectively pooling and aligning government grants and budgets relating to those blocks.
 - Achieving stretch performance by incorporating Local Authorities Local Public Service Agreements.
 - Reducing central control by negotiating new freedoms and flexibilities.
- 2.3 The County of Essex was selected for a Local Area Agreement last June. Since then, much work has been done across the County on producing a

Local Area Agreement document for the County and District Councils to agree, together with Health Partners, the Police, the Voluntary and Community Sectors and business groups.

- 2.4 The key co-ordinating body, through which much of the Local Area Agreement work has been channelled is the County-wide Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The work of this Forum has been underpinned by an Executive Group, chaired by the Chief Executive of the County Council. The Chief Executive of this Council is on that Group, representing the South Essex District Chief Executives. District-wide Local Strategic Partnerships have also been involved in the process, along with the Local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and Children and Young Persons Strategic Partnerships, to ensure as wide an involvement and commitment as possible.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The detailed work on the LAA has now reached a stage where the document is brought forward for Members' consideration and endorsement to the Council becoming one of the signatories, along with the County Council, all the other District Councils, the Local Strategic Partnerships, and other key partners. The aim is for the document to be formally submitted to Government no later than 24 February.
- 3.2 The document will then be considered by Ministers for approval in March and will come into operation from April 2006. It will cover a 3 year period. A copy of the latest LAA document is included as Appendix A. Appendix B outlines how each of the LAA targets impact on a District by District basis, to help Districts to understand the implications of each of the LAA priorities in their area.
- 3.3 At the same time as considering the LAA, Members are also asked to consider and sign into the draft Children and Young People's Plan. This is attached as Appendix C. This provides more detail in relation to some of the main areas covered in the LAA in respect of Children and Young People, as well as covering other actions planned in respect of the Childrens Act.

4 OFFICER COMMENTS

- 4.1 Many of the priorities included in the LAA accord with this Council's focus for activities, either directly or indirectly. For example, Priority 3 relates to work the District Council will be doing under the Local Development Framework, our work around the handyman and handy gardening schemes will input into Priority 4, our initiatives around recycling and composting will contribute to Priority 12, and our work through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships will impact on Priorities 8, 10 and 11. Indirectly, our leisure and holiday activity programmes impact on priorities 1 and 2 and through our support of the STAR Partnership, we will be able to contribute to Priority 14.
- 4.2 Hence, it would seem appropriate for the Council to become a signatory to the LAA, particularly given the funding streams involved and the potential benefits

for the District. Involvement in the LAA will also be viewed in a positive light in the next CPA process and therefore this secondary aspect should not be undervalued.

- 4.3 There are several aspects of the Children and Young People's Plan both in an LAA context and in relation to other key areas, which are worthy of this Council's support, particularly priority areas 1,2,4,5,6,8,9,10 and 12 listed in the Draft Plan. Again, the District Council's involvement would be both through direct action in some instances e.g. housing management functions or more indirectly e.g. through supporting the STAR Partnership and its initiatives.

5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The priority actions outlined in both the LAA and the Children and Young People's Plan could have a positive impact on Community Safety issues within the District.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The priority actions outlined, particularly in the LAA, will have a positive environmental impact in accord with this Council's own policies and priorities.

7 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 In terms of budget, the Council's budgetary priorities and actions already include initiatives which accord with priority areas listed in both plans. There is also the potential, through participation in the LAA process, to look in more detail at partnership funding and joint initiatives in specific instances, to the benefit of the local community. Also, through working within the LAA context, the District Council will gain further experience of working in accordance with a new and expanding area of Government attention, in terms of funding local initiatives.
- 7.2 In terms of reputation risk, there is clearly the opportunity for the Council to consolidate its reputation within the County and in the region through signing into both the LAA process and the draft Children and Young People's Plan. In CPA and Audit Commission terms, participation in and signing up to both work areas will also be viewed positively.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) To agree to the Council's participation and signatory to both the Essex Local Area Agreement and the draft Children and Young people's Plan.
 - (2) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, agree any necessary minor wording changes or commitments on behalf of the Authority.

Paul Warren
Chief Executive

Background Papers:-

None

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