
LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT (LAA) FOR ESSEX

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report explains the Government's Local Area Agreement initiative and its progress in Essex. It also outlines the implications for the District Council.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Local Area Agreements (LAAs), introduced in the Government's 2004 Spending Review are restated as a policy in its election manifesto, are billed as:

"A new way of working, to build a more flexible and responsible relationship between central government, and a locality on the priority outcomes that need to be achieved at a local level".

Key elements of such agreements are:

- Negotiation between central government and the wider public sector at local level, including local units of central government;
- Setting agreed 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
- Reduced central control by negotiating new freedoms and flexibilities

3 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 The County of Essex was selected for a Local Area Agreement in June. The County are leading the negotiations with the Government office and the intention is to have an Agreement in place and operational from next April.
- 3.2 The key co-ordinating body, through which much of the Local Area Agreement work is being channelled is the County-wide Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The work of this Forum is underpinned by an Executive Group, chaired by the Chief Executive of the County Council. The Chief Executive of this Council is also on that Group, representing the South Essex Chief Executives.
- 3.3 Work is currently underway preparing an initial submission on priorities for discussion with Government. It is hoped to conclude negotiations with Government and partners by next February.

- 3.4 Four county-wide groupings are progressing work around the four subject blocks. For example, the County's Children and Young Persons Strategic Partnership is leading on the Children and Young Persons block.
- 3.5 Because the themes and emerging targets and action will involve a range of partner agencies the Local Strategic Partnerships, which have been established on a District by District basis, will play a leading role locally. Our own Rochford Local Strategic Partnership, attended by both the Leader and Chief Executive, is expected to fully contribute and participate in the process. Similarly, other local partnership groupings, such as the Rochford Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Castle Point and Rochford Children and Young Person's Strategic Partnership, are expected to feed into the process.
- 3.6 An early draft of the headings/priority areas being pursued under the Local Area Agreement initiative is attached for Members information as an Appendix to this report.

4 OFFICER COMMENT

- 4.1 Whilst there are concerns around the governance arrangements associated with the Local Area Agreement process, it is important that the Council recognise the implications of this emerging initiative and participate in the process. In this way, we can ensure that any opportunities that are provided are taken up to the benefit of Rochford residents.
- 4.2 The District Council needs to contribute fully in all the Partnerships which input into the process – the Local Strategic Partnership, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, the Children and Young Persons Strategic Partnership, the Youth Strategy Forum, etc.
- 4.3 We need to ensure that the emerging targets from the LAA process complement the work that we are already doing or plan to do e.g. around reducing crime, improving the environment, enhancing the quality of life etc,. We also need to take into account the possible implications of this initiative within our own budget process at the Member Awaydays in November and January.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This initiative will impact on the environmental agenda with specific targets being developed and agreed with regard to the environment and quality of life.

6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This initiative will impact on the Community Safety agenda with specific targets being developed and agreed for this area of work.

7 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 It is important for the Council to engage and been seen to engage in this process for reputational, financial and service delivery reasons. There is a risk that if we do not engage, we may not secure any additional benefits the Local Area Agreement process affords. It may also impact upon our audit inspection regimes, with Authorities and members who have engaged in the process being looked on positively in any future assessments.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) to note the progress on the Local Area Agreement process to date, the emerging priorities as outlined in the Appendix and the timescales involved for agreement
 - (2) to authorise the Leader and the Council's representatives on the various Partnership forums to contribute to the Local Area Agreement process, to secure maximum potential benefits for the residents of the District
 - (3) To receive reports back from the Chief Executive over the period until March 2006 updating Members on progress on the Local Area Agreement process.

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Background Papers:

None.

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APPENDIX

To benefit the whole Essex community and address some of key challenges we face, we will:

1. Reduce obesity
2. Reduce the number of smokers in the county

to ensure that this young generation is not the first to have a lower life expectancy than its parents. This will require us to work in new ways across agencies to educate and incentivise changes in behaviour.

3. Ensure housing development is designed to promote healthier living

so that the environment enables Essex people to have a more healthy lifestyle without barriers to participation in the community. This will require us to work together in new ways to make spatial planning an exercise in advancing the total quality of life, to develop housing that assists people to be independent, and more likely to use local facilities

4. Reduce the need for older people to go into hospital or residential care

so that older people can enjoy life in their own homes for longer, and with more independence. This will require agencies to work together on prevention and on providing services in the home, but also on building new forms of community support that enables more people to make a positive contribution to their communities.

5. Generate inward investment

so new businesses will bring higher earning opportunities and make communities more sustainable. This will require us to work together to provide the right physical development opportunities, the right environment, infrastructure, and transport system and to develop the Gateways.

6. Increase the number of young people who take a job or stay on at school or in training at 16 to 18

so there will be a better-quality workforce with higher motivation to acquire the skills businesses need. This will require agencies to work together to promote a culture of training and workforce participation.

7. Raise educational attainment

so young people leave school with better opportunities. This will require us to reduce underperformance in primary and secondary schools and focus on at-risk groups such as children who are looked after.

8. Keep children and young people safe and enable them to contribute positively to society

so our children and young people grow up in a safe, secure environment. This will require us to protect children affected by domestic violence or crime and to ensure that young people leaving care have accommodation that meets their needs. We also feel that early intervention with young people at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour is important.

9. Save lives at risk from accidents

by working together on road safety and fire prevention.

10. Reduce crime and the fear of crime

so that people can go about their daily lives without worry. This will require agencies to work together to prevent crime, reassure communities and reduce the harm caused by alcohol and illegal drugs, domestic violence and anti-social behaviour.

11. Actively manage our environment

so that people live in surroundings that are kept pleasant through community action. This will entail keeping public spaces attractive and safe, reducing litter and pollution and managing waste better.

12. Increase people's ability to influence local public decisions

so that communities are confident they are shaping their own futures. Developing and promoting voluntary and community sector activity will be central to this.

13. Improve people's quality of life and sense of belonging

so that people feel they matter. To achieve this, we will focus on quality of life and service delivery in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. We also aim to improve social cohesion through community activities like sport and the arts and better public transport.