

Report to: **Cabinet** **Agenda Item**

Date: **18 October 2005**

By: **Director of Policy Management and Communications**

Title of report: **Local Area Agreement (LAA) for East Sussex**

Purpose of report: **To report on the development of the LAA and the submission of high level outcomes to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE).**

Recommendation: To consider the draft LAA submission (Appendix 2) and the next steps in the negotiation process

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The process of developing and achieving the LAA targets, and any associated resource implications for the County Council, will be considered as part of the Reconciling Policy and Resources process.

2. Background

2.1 As reported to Cabinet in July, the LAA is a three year agreement between central and local government setting out the priorities for a local area. It is agreed between central government, represented by the Government Regional Office, and the local area, represented by the County Council, working with the East Sussex Strategic Partnership (ESSP) and other key local partners.

2.2 There are four key service blocks within the LAA:

- Children and Young People
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Economic Development and Enterprise

2.3 The second round of the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) is incorporated into the LAA and is now described as the 'reward element' of the LAA. The expectation is that it will include, like the first round, 12 'stretch' targets which will attract financial reward on delivery. These must be the most important priorities within the overall LAA.

3. Development of the LAA

3.1 Since the announcement at the end of June that East Sussex was to be included in the next round of Local Area Agreements (LAAs), a great deal of work has taken place. Cllr. Bob Tidy is the Lead Cabinet Member overall for the LAA and he and Lead Cabinet Members for the issues covered by the service blocks have been involved in the development of relevant outcomes and targets. The

development of the LAA and its contents are based on agreed sets of principles (see Appendix 1) and have drawn heavily on the countywide and local Community Strategies which were themselves subject to very wide consultation. The work has included:

- the establishment of a Project Team consisting of officers leading on each of the four service blocks with input from the Council's finance and performance management teams;
- a wide range of meetings including the ESSP;
- the ESSP approving the establishment of a small, time limited, Project Board to oversee the development of the LAA;
- two events for wider partners;
- an event for elected Members from all three tiers of local government in September. A further seminar specifically for County Councillors was held following County Council on 11 October;
- in addition, the officers leading the blocks (colloquially known as the 'blockheads'), have held a variety of service specific meetings with partners and there has been extensive consultation by email. The dialogue is ongoing.

3.2 South East County Councils are collectively looking at the potential for targets that could cover a regional or sub regional area; possibilities being suggested include affordable housing and employment. At present the development of each Authority's own LAA is taking precedence but, as high level outcomes and enabling measures emerge, there will be the opportunity for County Councils with the same or similar targets to negotiate jointly.

3.3 The draft LAA was submitted to GOSE on 30 September in accordance with a GOSE determined deadline. It is attached as Appendix 2. It details the high level outcomes agreed by the County Council and our partners on the ESSP as jointly being a high priority in East Sussex. It also includes the mandatory outcomes, many of these specifically relate to Hastings as a beneficiary of Neighbourhood Renewal and other associated funds.

3.4 Communication is key to ensuring that Members and partners feel informed within the very tight timescales and, as well as seminars and meetings, a periodic LAA newsletter has been established to keep everyone informed. It is available on the ESSP website www.essp.org.uk.

4. Next Steps

4.1 The Government Office will consider our draft submission and share the content with colleagues in Government departments. Negotiations will take place between now and Christmas on the detail of the Agreement, especially on those targets which have been identified for performance reward. (There are 19 in the latest draft; these will need to be reduced to around 12.) The LAA will be signed off by Ministers in February 2006 for implementation from April 2006. The LAA will be subject to an annual 'refresh'.

4.2 Cabinet will receive regular updates and Lead Members will continue to be closely involved in the development of their relevant targets.

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Principles for the Development and Delivery of the LAA

1. Priorities identified must be realistic outcome focussed, have a significant impact within East Sussex and be related to the Community Strategies.
2. Priorities must be supported by robust data and capable of being performance managed.
3. Keep it simple and build on existing partnership working, challenge current ways of working and find new, more effective ways of working.
4. The process for the development of the LAA will be as open and transparent as possible.
5. Clear and effective communication is essential.
6. The involvement of partners will be proportionate to the contribution they can make to delivery of the outcomes.
7. The structures must be fit for purpose - i.e. we will not make decisions about supporting structures until we have clarified content.
8. Recognise the inherent tension between maximum inclusion in the LAA and the overall timetable.

Principles for Inclusion in the LAA

We have agreed that outcomes must:

- have a significant impact within East Sussex and arise from priorities identified in one or more of the six community strategies in East Sussex;
- require a partnership approach to delivery i.e. the issue cannot be fully addressed by a single agency working on its own; and
- have the potential for successful delivery over a three year timescale - where a successful outcome is longer term, a clearly identified step change can be achieved in three years.

In addition, County Council contributions must be drawn from existing County Council priorities identified through the Reconciling Policy and Resources process.