

Date of Meeting	15 March 2007
Title of Report	A Local Area Agreement for Wiltshire
Portfolio	Partnership Working
Link to Corporate Priorities	Partnership Working
Key Decision	Yes
Executive Workplan Ref	B319
Public Report	Yes

Summary of Report

An LAA can be described as an agreement between government and local areas which strikes a balance between the priorities of central Government, and those of local government and their partners. It involves negotiating a joint commitment to deliver services within a framework of measurable and accountable outcomes (or goals). The LAA is a Government requirement that affects all Local Authorities.

This report presents Members with the Local Area Agreement for Wiltshire. The District Council is invited to sign the Local Area Agreement and to signify commitment by agreeing to deliver actions included within the agreement. A summary of those actions that the District Council will be directly involved in delivering is included at Appendix One.

Officer Recommendations

It is recommended that Members approve the following

That Members of the Executive confirm North Wiltshire District Council's commitment to helping deliver the activities listed within the Local Area Agreement.

That Members give approval for NWDC to be a signatory to the Local Area Agreement for Wiltshire 2007 –2010.

That Members give delegated authority to the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council to sign the agreement.

That Members give delegated authority to the Chief Executive to approve any final changes to the final draft required for approval by Government.

Other than those implications agreed with the relevant Officers and referred to below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Community & Environmental Implications	Human Resources Implications	Equality & Diversity Implications
yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Contact Officer	Jo Cogswell	Community Partnership Team Leader
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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This report presents Members with the Local Area Agreement for Wiltshire (Appendix One). The District Council is invited to sign the Local Area Agreement and to signify commitment by agreeing to deliver actions included within the agreement. The outcomes of the Local Area Agreement are summarised in Appendix Two. A summary of those actions that the District Council will be directly involved in delivering is included at Appendix Three.

2. Options and Options Appraisal

- 2.1. **Option One** It is recommended that Members approve the following
 - 2.1.1. That Members of the Executive confirm North Wiltshire District Council's commitment to helping deliver the activities listed within the Local Area Agreement.
 - 2.1.2. That Members give approval for NWDC to be a signatory to the Local Area Agreement for Wiltshire 2007 –2010.
 - 2.1.3. That Members give delegated authority to the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council to sign the agreement.
 - 2.1.4. That Members give delegated authority to the Chief Executive to approve any final changes to the final draft required for approval by Government.
- 2.2. **Option two** Members do not approve the recommendations listed in paragraph 2.1 above.

3. Background Information

- 3.1. Wiltshire Strategic Board, the Local Strategic Partnership has championed the development of the first Local Area Agreement (LAA) for Wiltshire. The LAA is a Government requirement that affects all Local Authorities. Wiltshire is in the third and final wave of the development of LAAs. Partner agencies have been involved throughout the development of the Local Area Agreement which is built around strict Government Guidance and a number of mandatory outcomes.
- 3.2. A Local Area Agreement can be described as an agreement between government and local areas which strikes a balance between the priorities of central Government, and those of local government and their partners. It involves negotiating a joint commitment to deliver services within a framework of measurable and accountable outcomes (or goals).
- 3.3. There are clearly defined roles within the LAA guidance for County Councils, District Councils and Local Strategic Partnerships.
- 3.4. At the January 18 meeting of the Executive Members considered an early consultation draft Local Area Agreement for Wiltshire. Members discussed at that time the impact that the Local Area Agreement would have on the District Council. The LAA presents an opportunity to deliver actions that support many of the areas of priority that are highlighted in the county Community Strategy and the District level Community Strategies.

- 3.5. The LAA guidance describes District Councils as *critical partners* in the development of the LAA. The recent Local Government White Paper highlights the need for a framework for effective and co-ordinated delivery places a *Duty to Co-operate* on a number of public sector bodies including District Councils.
- 3.6. The message from Central Government is clear; public sector partners need to work together in effective partnerships to agree and achieve targets set out in an LAA that will strike a balance between national and local priorities and demonstrably meet community need.
- 3.7. Wiltshire's LAA is being developed in line with a template provided by central Government which uses 'blocks' or 'themes' to identify the relevant areas of service delivery under the agreement. These are:
- *Children and Young People*
 - *Economic Development and Enterprise*
 - *Environment*
 - *Healthier Communities*
 - *Older People*
 - *Safer and Stronger Communities*
- 3.8. Within each of the blocks there are a number of mandatory outcomes that each LAA in the Country must include. Other outcomes have been developed as the result of work in each of the block areas. The LAA can be viewed as one of the delivery mechanisms for the community strategy, as such many of the outcomes that are being put forward are relevant to issues within the North Wiltshire Community Strategy.
- 3.9. The January 18 report highlighted the fact that NWDC must be very clear about what it can and cannot support and delivery within the Local Area Agreement for Wiltshire. Lead Officers and Members have considered the detail behind the Local Area Agreement. The sign up sheet at Appendix One highlights this detail and includes officer comments.
- 3.10. Commitments and actions for year one have been built into the 2007/08 budget and Corporate plan.
- 3.11. The Council is now being asked to formally sign up to the Local Area Agreement and demonstrate commitment to delivering actions and activities that will achieve the target outcomes.

4. The sign Up Process

- 4.1. The LAA Project Board has prepared some information for all partners who will sign up to the agreement. Much of this is included in the text of the full document, key point for Members attention include information just what it is the Council is signing up to, what future arrangements will be and what the overall outcomes of the LAA are.
- 4.2. What does signing up to the LAA mean for NWDC?**
- 4.3. The Local Government White Paper envisages LAAs as being the delivery plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy. LAAs will in future form the central delivery contract between central Government and Local Government and its partners.

- 4.4. The County Council is responsible for preparing the LAA and the local authority and local partners are responsible for agreeing with government the small number of priority targets for improvement that are relevant to them. The White Paper proposes new duties:
- for the local authority and named partners to co-operate with each other to agree the targets in the LAA and
 - for the local authority and named partners to have regard to relevant targets in the LAA
- 4.5. Delivery of the LAA will be monitored by GOSW. Proposals in the White Paper are that failure to deliver may result in a range of sanctions from improvement support to intervention by Government and removal of functions.
- 4.6. The County Council is the Accountable Body for the LAA and as such will be putting in place arrangements to mitigate the risk which it assumes in this role. Risk is limited in the first year of the LAA as funding is being utilised in the same way as it has been used in 2006/07.
- 4.7. What are we signing up to?**
- 4.8. The LAA is not a legally binding Contract in its current form - to make it so would require a separate legal document(s). However, it is important that the LAA is delivered and that requires all Partners to agree to certain commitments. These are to:
- endeavour to deliver the outcomes, targets and actions identified in the Appendix One working collaboratively and in partnership, as necessary to facilitate delivery
 - build these commitments into our strategic planning processes namely our Corporate Plan
 - identify individual responsibilities to deliver these commitments through the appraisal process or otherwise
 - monitor and manage progress through the Council's performance management processes and to develop robust action plans to ensure delivery is achieved
 - report on progress on a quarterly basis to the relevant partnership which has taken interim responsibility for oversight of the Block
 - identify and assess risks and to take steps to manage and minimise those identified risks
 - report risks and any barriers to delivery to the relevant thematic partnership and how these are being overcome – including any support which might be required to achieve delivery
 - be accountable for delivery of the commitments agreed
 - report to WiSBEX/WiSB when progress is not on target
 - achieve Value for Money in the utilisation of LAA funding where this has been received to deliver outcomes, targets or actions
 - agree to pool and share relevant information with partners insofar as this is necessary to monitor delivery of the LAA
- 4.9. Members will see from Summary of LAA Outcomes at Appendix Two that NWDC will not be directly involved in each of the outcomes and actions within the LAA. Appendix three highlights NWDC involvement in more detail. The LAA is subject to annual review and the actions that NWDC is involved in are likely to change as a part of that review. The Council will need to work to ensure that the Corporate Plan continues to reflect what it is that NWDC will deliver within the LAA and that appropriate resource is in place.

5. Key Issues and Future Arrangements

- 5.1. Recent Government publications including the Local Government White Paper point to the fact that LAAs will assume increasing importance with more area based funding being channelled through them in the future. Whilst the full implications of this are not yet clear this may require additional and more robust sign up requirements when all funding is pooled and may be utilised in a different way than proposed for year one of this LAA.
- 5.2. Consultancy work is currently being undertaken by SOLACE on risk assessment/risk management arrangements with the Safer Wiltshire Executive Partnership – this work will help inform any future arrangements.
- 5.3. Options which may be considered in the future include:
- Arrangements for the sharing of risk with the Accountable Body
 - Legal agreements for the delivery of outcomes where the level of risk may require this. Such agreements could be with individual partners or with a partnership where this has been incorporated and has a legal status.
 - Arrangements for the pooling of funding and joint commissioning
 - Levels of detail and complexity will depend upon risk
- 5.4. Any change to the Governance Structure or the nature of the responsibility or commitment of this Council to the LAA in the future will be subject to Member approval.
- 5.5. There are specific areas of the LAA which will need further work and consideration. The stronger block continues to be the subject of debate. This debate is not concerned with the content of the block – there is clear agreement across partners that the work in the stronger block is key to the future of Wiltshire’s communities. However there is still some question as to how the actions in this block can be best managed going into the future.

6. Timetable

- 6.1. The timetable for the LAA is as follows.
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|------------------|---|--|
| February / March | - | Agreement of partners |
| 5 March | - | Wiltshire Strategic Board Agree Final Draft |
| 25 March 07 | - | Wiltshire LAA is agreed with GOSW and Government |
| 1 April | - | LAA comes into effect |
- 6.2. From April onwards work will continue to resolve issues around the LAA including a Governance and Partnership Structure informed by the work by SOLACE. Similarly a management structure for the stronger block and reporting in progress and delivery in year one.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. There is no requirement or request within this report for Members to commit financial resources. The detail of the actions under each suboutcome of the LAA do have resource implications that will need to be met within the Corporate Plan for each year of the LAA in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Commitments and actions for year one have been built into the 2007/08 budget and Corporate plan.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report as the LAA is not a legally binding contract in its current form. However this Council will need to give consideration and formal endorsement to a final Governance framework that is developed as a part of the Local Area Agreement.

9. Community and Environmental Implications

- 9.1. There is a great opportunity for issues and priorities that affect North Wiltshire to be addressed through the actions and ambitions included within the LAA.
- 9.2. A good working relationship and contributions from Officers and Members will serve to ensure that North Wiltshire issues are championed through both the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA.

10. Human Resource Implications

- 10.1. The implications of actions that are approved against outcomes within the final LAA need to be considered as a part of the Council's Business Planning process.

11. Equality and Diversity Implications

- 11.1. The very nature of LAA and its ability to deliver against priorities in the Community Strategies across the County puts issues of equality and diversity at its centre. There are opportunities for inequalities to be addressed as a result of the actions of many partners within the LAA.

Appendices:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appendix 1 – Local Area Agreement for Wiltshire as at February 27 2007• Appendix 2 – Summary of LAA Outcomes• Appendix 3 –NWDC LAA Activity Schedule
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LAA Guidance for Round 3 and Refresh for Rounds 1 and 2 March 2006• Strong and Prosperous Communities Local Government White Paper October 2006• Wiltshire County Council LAA information pages at http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council/wiltshire-strategic-board/local-area-agreement.htm

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