

Report of: Neighbourhood Renewal Business Manager

To: Executive Board

Date: 20th February 2006

Item No:

**Title of Report : 'Working Together for a Better Oxfordshire'
Oxfordshire's Draft Local Area Agreement (LAA) 2006-09**



Summary and Recommendations



Purpose of report: To provide information on the draft Local Area Agreement for Oxfordshire and to seek endorsement for the principles set out in the agreement.

Key decision: No

Portfolio Holder: Leader of the Council

Scrutiny Responsibility: Environment Scrutiny, Community Scrutiny, Finance Scrutiny

Ward(s) affected: All

Report Approved by: Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Dave Higgins – Finance, Lindsay Cane – Legal Services

Policy Framework:

The Local Area Agreement contributes towards the delivery of the Oxford Plan.

Recommendation(s):

1. To note the contents of the Draft Local Area Agreement.
2. To endorse the principles contained within it.
3. To delegate the power to the Chief Executive, after consultation with Councillor Hollingsworth, to (i) to identify outstanding areas and final targets as set out in the report and (ii) to take decisions to the extent to which the Council is involved in the projects outlined in the report and (iii) to negotiate the division of the award of any reward funding.

Background

1. Oxfordshire has been successful in its bid to secure Local Area Agreement (LAA) for 2006/07. This means there is the potential to strengthen partnership working to deliver local priorities and secure significant financial reward grant if the partnership is successful.

2. The LAA is a 3 year agreement that is in the process of being agreed between central government, GOSE, Oxfordshire County Council and the Oxfordshire Community Partnership and other partners at a local level, including all of the District Councils. It offers a mechanism to join up the delivery of local services under one umbrella.

3. 'Thriving Communities' is the overarching theme for Oxfordshire. A full copy of the Draft Agreement is available in the Members Room.

4. The LAA will concentrate on 4 key areas (a standard format for most of the LAAs in the country).

- Children and young people
- Healthier communities and older people
- Safer and stronger communities
- Economic development and enterprise

5. District Councils, PCT, Police and other agencies have been asked to map what they currently do in these areas, including existing targets outputs and resources that can contribute to the priorities identified by the Working Groups. These agencies have also been asked to contribute towards identifying the priority areas.

Governance

6. The County Council will have the lead role. A Public Services Board has been established which is member led and which is chaired by the Leader of the County Council to oversee the work. Councillor Alex Hollingsworth is on the Board and Caroline Bull is the supporting officer.

7. The Council cannot divest functions and responsibilities via the LAA, rather it is an alignment of priorities and resources targeted at these priorities.

8. A Working Groups for each theme will take the work forward and the lead officers on the Working Groups will report to the Public Services Board.

9. Where possible the Working Groups have been based upon existing partnerships.

Priorities

10. The priorities identified in the Plan (Version 2) currently include:

- Sustaining Oxfordshire's successful economy
- Addressing housing needs
- Tackling traffic congestion
- Improving educational attainment and skills
- Improving the Street Scene and enhancing the environment
- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour
- Improving health
- Rationalising waste management to reduce the environmental and economic impact
- Making better use of natural resources.

Working Groups

11. These priorities have been developed through the following block theme working groups.

a) Children and young people (Oxford City contact Val Johnson)

This block is being led by the County Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, which is also developing the county's Children and Young people's Plan.

b) Healthier communities and older people (Oxford City contact Val Johnson)

A new multi-agency Working Group has been set up including representatives from District Council's, PCT and Age Concern.

c) Safer and stronger communities (Oxford City contact Richard Adams)

The County Safer and Stronger Communities Group have led on this block.

d) Economic development and enterprise (Oxford City Council contacts Steve Daniels and Val Johnson)

The Oxfordshire Economic Partnership will take on the LAA work for this block. There is also an Affordable Housing Group which will report to the Public Services Board.

e) Environment (Oxford City Council contact Phil Dunsdon and Val Johnson)

The Waste Management Group and a new partnership group focussed on Clean/Green issues will report to the Public Service Board.

Targets

12. Each block has a number of targets attached to it. These include targets contained in numerous other strategies and plans. For example key priority targets have been identified which are included in the Oxfordshire Children and Young People's Plan.

13. Of all the targets identified there will be 12 'stretch targets'. These are the key performance indicators that the programme will be judged upon and if achieved there will be financial rewards. The stretch targets are currently in the process of being negotiated. A list of the proposed stretch targets is provided in Annex 1 along with their current status.

Timescales

14. The stretch targets are to be agreed between the Public Service Board, GOSE and Government Ministers by 14th February. The aim is to start delivery by 1 April 2006. This will be a rolling 3 year programme with annual review of targets and 6 monthly review of progress.

Resources implications

15. This is still an area of uncertainty. Funding streams within the Council have been identified that contribute towards the delivery of the stretch targets. These funding streams are all aligned rather than pooled. This means that the control and deployment of resources remains with the Authority and decision making is not devolved or divested to the Public Services Board.

16. There is an expectation that there will be some pooled budget by the end of the 3 year period but this will be a decision further on in the development of the LAA and at that point the governance arrangements will need to be reviewed.

17. Depending upon which stretch targets are agreed there may be an opportunity for Oxford City Council to participate in the delivery of it and, if targets are achieved, share in the reward fund.

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Background papers:

'Working Together for a Better Oxfordshire'
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