
LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT – FIRST INTERIM REVIEW

Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor John Williams, Leader
Responsible Director – Lorraine O’Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of Report

1. To present the outcome of the first mid year review of the Local Area Agreement (LAA), set in the context of wider LAA developments.

Summary

2. All Local Area Agreements are the subject of six monthly progress reports using a ‘Red/Amber/Green’ RAG Rating. The first assessment prepared by Government Office North East (GONE) following our first interim review in December, is rated as Amber for Overall Progress and Green for Direction of Travel.

Information and Analysis

3. Darlington forms part of the Second Round of Local Area Agreements that were developed during 2005/06. The final agreement was signed in March 2006 with implementation commencing from the start of the current financial year (2006/07).

LAA Review Process

4. Local Partnerships are primarily responsible for performance managing their own Local Area Agreements. The level of ongoing involvement of the Government Office will be proportionate to performance achieved. Guidance however, calls for six monthly performance review meetings at which areas should report on progress against all outcomes and targets and spend against each of the four blocks to regional Government Office.
5. The first six month performance report was submitted to GONE in November 2006 and after endorsement by the LAA Steering Group in early December 2006 was subject to a formal review meeting between GONE and the Council’s Chief Executive and secretariat. Feedback at the meeting was very positive and supportive of the approach being taken locally.
6. LAA Guidance calls for submission after each review meeting of a highlight report including a performance rating from Government Office to Central Government. The proposed first interim rating for Darlington is attached at **Appendix 1** for reference. The rating for Overall Progress as amber reflects a rigorous rule based assessment, whereby recent performance results in the mandatory community safety outcomes has limited our ability to score above amber at this stage. It is felt that the green rating for Direction of Travel is justified based on our submission and progress to date.

Future Arrangements

7. In the light of the details emerging from the recent Local Government White Paper (Strong and Prosperous Communities – DCLG October 2006) arrangements for future partnership working on Local Area Agreements will need to strike a balance between staying focused on the targeted outcomes of our first LAA and harmonising subsequent versions with the wider agenda. Our first LAA set out a clear intention to target activity on one priority group, learn from this experience and roll out the benefits to wider Community Strategy Action Planning. Future links between the LSP, a new Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement will be reviewed and proposals worked up to bring about a convergence of the relevant processes after the first full year review milestone.

Conclusion

8. Darlington has effectively embraced the principles behind Local Area Agreements. In the first nine months we have been recognised for showing considerable commitment to the process. Early priorities were about creating the correct governance arrangements and setting out effective programme and project management. We have achieved these goals and are now starting to see the benefits of our careful planning. Schemes are coming into full implementation and delivering against the agreed outcomes. This first interim performance appraisal is positive with promising prospects for continued improvement.

Outcome of Consultation

9. This matter has been subject to ongoing consultation with the sponsors, project managers and constituent members of the Darlington LAA Steering Group. These partners are supportive of the initiative and have been instrumental in the reporting of performance.

Legal Implications

10. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

11. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

12. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

Decision Deadline

13. For the purpose of the ‘call-in’ procedure this issue does not represent an urgent matter.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (a) note and endorse the first LAA interim review rating prepared by GONE;
- (b) submit relevant reports on the above to inform and update the LAA Steering Group and LSP Board;
- (c) recognise the necessary ongoing commitment to the LAA process required in our role as local authority, community leader and accountable body, in the context of new and emerging duties arising from the recent Local Government White Paper.

Reasons

15. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- (a) to keep all partners aware of the outcome and need of ongoing performance management;
- (b) to acknowledge the growing importance of Local Area Agreements in the government’s agenda.

Lorraine O’Donnell
Assistant Chief Executive

Background Papers

DCLG White Paper – Strong and Prosperous Communities (October 2006)

John Bosson : Extension 2016
Jb/

TEMPLATE FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICE'S HIGHLIGHT REPORTS TO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ON THE SIX-MONTHLY OR ANNUAL REVIEW OF EACH LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

GOVERNMENT OFFICE NORTH EAST HIGHLIGHT REPORT ON DARLINGTON LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

1 April 2006 to 30 September 2006

1) Overall Progress

Amber

Describe the key reasons why the rating has been given, including which of the statements given in the RAG ratings definitions are true.

At this early stage, because there are some mandatory indicators where performance is below trajectory, we have to register that, on an overall progress rating, an amber marking is most appropriate. The definition of amber being “the most likely outcome at the end of the three year period of the LAA is that a minority of the mandatory outcomes and other outcomes of key importance to the local partnership will not be achieved.”

There are a number of indicators linked to the mandatory ‘crime’, ‘empowerment’ and Cleaner, Safer, Greener outcomes where performance is below trajectory or mid year data is not available. This performance trend was anticipated from the outset and is being carefully managed by the Partnership.

2) Direction of Travel

Green

The LAA has 78 indicators, 36 are on target, 21 are below target and mid year data is not available against the remaining 21 indicators.

In all instances where performance is below target partners are confident that through the successful delivery of the products contained in the LAA the targets set for March 2009 will be achievable.

The self-assessment and evidence provided by the partnership give a clear picture of the outcomes and benefits arising from the LAA. The evidence has been fully evaluated by policy leads within the GO who have expressed their satisfaction and raised no issues of concern.

3) Risks to the achievement of mandatory outcomes

List all mandatory outcomes in the LAA for which there is a residual risk that they will not be achieved at the end of the three-year period of the LAA. For each, describe what the risks are and what is being or will be done to address these risks including what, if any, support or action by central government might be needed to mitigate any of these risks. Give an assessment of how likely it is that this will address those risks and which, if any, remain unaddressed.

In common with all of Darlington's outcomes the successful delivery of targets is dependent upon implementation of a number of products:

Those relating to mandatory crime, empowerment and cleaner safer greener outcomes currently off trajectory and progress to date against each is as follows:

Development of an intelligence led approach to crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Progress to date:

Work is now ongoing to standardise the format of the data sets gathered. Further data collection is still required from health, leisure and Youth Offending Service. Full time ICT officer is now co-located within Community Safety Unit to help build momentum against the product plan. Partnership Analyst appointed. The timelines within the product plan are currently being revised to dovetail with existing community safety initiatives. The revision will be reviewed by the Steering Group for approval.

The product is currently delivering against its agreed plan.

Enhancing our response to crime and ASB – Wardens/ Police Community Support Officers (PCSO)/ Campaigns

Progress to date:

Additional PCSOs and Wardens recruited. Deployment will be determined through Business Analyst output. Campaigns have commenced. Criminal damage - radio and publicity campaign commenced, Town Crier publicity commissioned for the year, small scale local campaigns to tackle shed burglaries in hot spot areas started. Local StreetSafe operations supported.

The product is currently delivering against its agreed plan.

Enhancing our response to crime and ASB – Domestic abuse

Progress to date:

Work has been ongoing with Children's Services and the Supporting People Team. Key elements of the product prior to full implementation were finalised on the 26th October.

The product is currently delivering against its agreed plan.

Increasing community capacity through volunteering – CVS capacity building

Progress to date:

Researchers from the University of Teesside and the University of Newcastle are on target. Recruitment for the youth volunteering post has been delayed.

A revised plan is currently being developed for Steering Group approval.

Increasing community capacity through volunteering – Pilot volunteering opportunities

Progress to date:

Consultants have been appointed to map the current levels of third sector activity throughout the Borough in order to provide a baseline position. The viability of transferring the information onto the GIS system is currently being assessed. The V bid - which was to enhance this product, working with 16-25 year olds, was unsuccessful - this will have a marginal impact on the overall product.

The product is currently delivering against its agreed plan.

Increasing community capacity – Pride in your street/ street champions

Progress to date:

Job descriptions for Pride in Your Street/Street Champions complete. Recruitment process to be aligned with Young Caretakers – Recruitment completed with a view to a commencement date of January 2007.

The product is currently delivering against its agreed plan.

Increasing community capacity – Young caretakers

Progress to date:

Young Caretakers job descriptions finalised and assessed under the Job Evaluation procedures. Recruitment process to be aligned with Pride in your Street/ Street Champions - advertising completed with a view to a commencement date of January 2007.

The product is currently delivering against its agreed plan.

Increasing community capacity – Area based community engagement

Progress to date:

Progress is currently on track. Work is continuing to develop the proposals for the Denes and North Park projects. Open day for North Park to enable local involvement and input to preferred design arranged for November 2006.

The product is currently delivering against its agreed plan.

Increasing community capacity – Parks for all

Progress to date:

Progress is currently on track. Bensham Road play area has now been installed with the plan for the remaining projects moving ahead in line with Cabinet approvals.

The product is currently delivering against its agreed plan.

Street Scene apprenticeships

Progress to date:

The need to embed the Street Scene approach is required prior to the structured introduction of an apprenticeship scheme. The development of the scheme is currently ongoing with a view to recruitment from April 2007.

A revised plan is currently being developed for Steering Group approval.

We are satisfied in all cases that appropriate actions have been put in place to ensure successful delivery of all mandatory outcomes and targets.

4) Risks to the achievement of other outcomes of key importance to the local partnership

List any other outcomes of key importance to the local partnership for which there is a residual risk that they will not be achieved at the end of the three-year period of the LAA. For each, describe what the risks are and what is being or will be done to address these risks including what, if any, support or action by central government might be needed to mitigate any of these risks. Give an assessment of how likely it is that this will address those risks and which, of any, remain unaddressed.

As with mandatory outcomes we are satisfied that appropriate actions are in place to ensure successful delivery of local outcomes and targets.

5) The impact of the LAA and strong performance

Describe what key differences the implementation of the LAA has made, including in terms of better delivery, strengthened partnership working including VCS engagement, innovation, improved local performance management, enhanced efficiency, improved central and local government relations or the impact that any specific initiative within the LAA is having.

Identify any outcomes, mandatory or not, against which there is particularly strong performance or activity is taking place that is expected to lead to such and describe this, including any examples of innovative ideas which are delivering, which could be of wider application, i.e. what, if any, transferable good practice this might include.

Key successes and achievements

By the end of September 2006 considerable progress had been made in the implementation of the LAA:

- Effective planning of the whole programme, projects and products had been completed;
- Stronger partnership working arrangements are in place and contributing to the delivery of the process;
- Governance arrangements have been strengthened with monthly Steering Group meetings including financial and performance reporting in place;
- The use of highlight reporting, monitoring and review ensures the links between performance and activity are being made;
- After the first six months products are starting to make a difference on the ground and will be monitored against key milestones. Overall the programme is on track.

Whilst in many areas there has been insufficient time to have any meaningful impact on individual performance indicators, the following areas have seen some notable improvements or sustained a positive trend in performance:

- Increasing the percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C GCSEs, whilst at the same time reducing the number of pupils leaving school without achieving any qualification;
- Reducing the number of first time entrants into the Youth Justice System;
- Improving standards of cleanliness as measured by actual levels of litter and deposits;
- Reducing the amount of waste collected and then improving rates of recycling and composting;
- Improvements in road safety for children as measured by the number seriously injured;
- Considerable improvement in the stability and quality of life for looked after children;
- Improved initiation rates for breastfeeding;
- Increasing the number of problem drug and alcohol users in treatment programmes;
- Improving the proportion of 16-18 year olds in structured learning.

Funding

The Statement of Grant Usage provided by Darlington shows Safer Stronger Communities block funding as having been spent in the Children and Young People and Healthier Communities blocks. The spend as allocated through the Grant Determination Letter is in full accordance with the approved LAA agreed in March 2006. Within that it was a clearly set out intention to better deliver the overarching Safer and Stronger Communities agenda by allocating specified amounts of SSCF to relevant products which are administered, for reasons of better local management and accountability, alongside linked initiatives under the other LAA blocks.

Spend allocated through the SSC block is being used directly to strengthen communities in products across the LAA. The reporting as a result is out of line with expected block by block allocations but the outcome remains the same, spend is taking place against the approved products which are delivering Safer and Stronger Communities outcomes.

This pre-empts paragraph 5.49 of the White Paper.

Partnership Working

The LAA is proving to be beneficial in consolidating the existing strength of partnership working and taking this to a new level of commitment by partners. Over and above this it is stimulating greater involvement in the community and voluntary sector and developing improved linkages across sectors.

Scope for streamlining activities is being explored and developed through re-engineering processes, assessing efficiency gains and improved alignment of activities. Efficiencies already identified are being re-invested into the achievement of the programme. The wider linkages between products, initiatives and agencies, which have been identified in the first six months, will pay dividends over the full duration of the LAA.

In particular the authority and PCT are now working more closely in jointly commissioning projects. Product 2 (Cluster based initiatives) and Product 18 (Mainstreaming effective health support in all school clusters) for example, have benefited from joint development leading to an amalgamation of staffing structures, recruitment and selection exercises. Delivering savings on the ground through developing a single team with a wider skill mix and combined management and reporting arrangements.

6) Missing information

Identify any gaps in any indicators, baselines, targets and trajectories relating to mandatory outcomes where it remains unclear how and by when one or more of these gaps will be filled or removed and what action is being taken to address this, including what, if any, support or action by central government might be needed to address these.

A small number of indicators do not have mid year data due to annual reporting timeframes, year-end census arrangements or national survey requirements.

It is still necessary to develop performance indicators in respect of 'Increased community access to school resources and schools contributing to wider neighbourhood renewal objectives.' We have agreed that a set of appropriate measures will be completed in the third quarter.

7) Other key issues for Government

Describe any other key issues arising from the review that the local partnership and/or GO wishes to draw to central government's attention, including any feedback on how well LAAs are working for the local partnership and GO and what might be done to improve them and remove any persistent barriers to achievement.

Darlington has adopted an innovative approach to the development of the LAA. They are now keen to be allowed time to deliver without further administrative changes. They are fully aware of the implications of the White Paper and the transitional period we are moving into but do not want this to distract from delivery.