
DEVELOPING A LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT FOR DARLINGTON

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

Purpose of Report

1. For members to agree that the draft basket of indicators appended in **Appendix 1** form the basis for negotiation as the Local Area Agreement (LAA) for Darlington.

Background

2. A Local Area Agreement acts as the delivery plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for Darlington. As such, it needs to contain up to 35 indicators drawn from the national list of 198, the inclusion of which needs to be agreed with Government Office North East (GONE), along with a further 16 statutory Children and Young People indicators.

Information and Analysis

3. This report explains the following:
 - (a) How the LAA acts as the delivery plan for the SCS;
 - (b) That the LAA which we are required to develop for the next 3 years differs fundamentally from our existing pilot LAA;
 - (c) The process to date;
 - (d) Next steps.

The LAA as the delivery plan for the SCS

4. A separate report on the agenda presents the final SCS. The LAA is the delivery plan for the first three years. Indicators selected for the LAA should reflect the ambition of the SCS whilst being capable of showing improvement over the three year lifetime of the LAA.

A different LAA

5. Whilst the existing pilot LAA was optional, the new LAA is compulsory. All local authorities must have a new LAA in place for 2008-2011. No initial additional funding is available, and reward grant funding (the money government pay on successful achievement of 3-year targets) is likely to be relatively small.
6. The current LAA is focused on children and young people, as we sought to improve hard to shift performance areas in line with our mature approach to performance management and prioritisation. The new LAA will have a remit across the whole of the SCS and draft indicators have been chosen across both priorities and all five themes.

7. Governance arrangements need careful consideration as this is key to successful delivery and accountability. The council is the accountable body for both the new and existing LAAs. Strong programme management currently coordinated by the council for the current LAA needs to be undertaken by the LSP secretariat for the new LAA. For both LAAs, GONE continues to have a monitoring role, with the new LAA especially relevant in the council's future risk assessment as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), the replacement for Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) from 2009.

The process to date

8. As the delivery plan of the SCS, the LAA's development follows that of the SCS. Strong project management arrangements agreed in July 2007 by Cabinet have ensured that the SCS development has remained on track, and we remain on course to develop a strong LAA in line with our own internal and GONE's external timelines. Initially, as the SCS was being developed and with a draft document the subject of consultation, a 'technical list' of 35 indicators was developed via a series of filters, which included their potential achievability, the availability of baseline information and their linkages with the emerging SCS priorities, themes and strands.
9. Further consultation and engagement was conducted through LSP workshop meetings held in January/February 2008. Five workshops, one per SCS theme were held, with high attendance from a wide range of partners. The technical list of indicators was further assessed in terms of achievability, suitable collection methods, baseline information, etc. and developed into a potential list of indicators suitable for inclusion in a draft LAA. We continue to work well with GONE in developing the LAA.
10. **Appendix 1** details 35 indicators that could potentially form the basis of a LAA for Darlington. They are subject to further work with partners and formal negotiation with GONE, although early discussions with Government Office have been encouraging. This set of indicators has been selected according to SCS priority and theme, showing coverage against both 'One Darlington' and 'Perfectly Placed' priorities, and is therefore Darlington focused.

Next Steps

11. The final LAA will not be signed off until June 2008, with the intervening time spent working with partners on producing baseline information, 3-year targets and amending the draft LAA as appropriate. The structure of the LSP is changing to ensure it is fit for purpose, with further development work necessary around the remit of an executive group to ensure it has the ability to deliver the LAA including all legal and financial requirements.

Outcome of Consultation

12. Consultation with a range of stakeholders in recent months has informed the production of the Sustainable Community Strategy, providing the basis for the development of the Local Area Agreement. LSP workshops have been engaged in selecting indicators for inclusion, and this will continue as the indicator set progresses through negotiation over the coming months until sign off in June 2008. The LSP Board have considered the list of indicators.

Legal Implications

13. 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

14. 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. The relevant Local Area Agreement targets have been selected in recognition of those requirements and the LAA is complementary to meeting the general duty. The LAA has been drafted in consultation with the Safer Communities Co-ordinator and key partners.

Council Policy Framework

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

Decision deadline

16. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

Conclusion

17. The draft LAA appended in **Appendix 1** provides clear linkages to the new vision for Darlington and offers a strong basis to commence negotiation with GONE. The indicators selected for inclusion are draft at this stage, and are subject to further discussions and negotiations with both GONE and partners alike. The final LAA with full performance information will be presented to Cabinet prior to formal sign off with GONE.

Recommendations

18. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - (a) endorse the draft LAA attached in **Appendix 1** and note that the indicators included are draft and subject to negotiation with GONE and are therefore potentially liable to change;
 - (b) note that the draft LAA has been submitted to GONE in order to meet Department of Communities and Local Government deadlines;
 - (c) agree to receive the final LAA in June 2008.

Reasons

19. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:
 - (a) to ensure effective delivery of the new vision for Darlington;
 - (b) to fulfil the Council's statutory duties to adopt a LAA.

Lorraine O'Donnell
Assistant Chief Executive

Background papers

There are no background papers

Andy Robinson – Ext. 2014