

Cabinet 1st November 2006

Report of the Chief Executive

Draft Local Area Agreement

Purpose of Report

1. To highlight the draft Local Area Agreement (LAA) which was prepared in accordance with Government requirements for the end of September. The Authority is required to work with partners to finalise the LAA by the end of February 2007 for implementation from April 2007.

Background

2. At its meeting on 14th June, the Cabinet received an introductory report on the background to the LAA, and the proposed process for its development. The report set out the key elements of the LAA, which in summary are to agree and deliver a range of key local improvements and outcomes, and through this process to:-
 - Bring together and simplify different funds.
 - Devolve decision making.
 - Encourage greater linkages across public services.
 - Promote greater understanding between central and local government and partners about what is important within a locality.
3. Dudley has been identified as a Round 3 authority for participation in the Local Area Agreement process. This requires that we have a signed Agreement with Central Government by March 2007. National guidance on the content and process of the LAA has been published, which largely reflect the requirements placed on earlier rounds. The structure of the LAA is based around 4 blocks:
 - Safer and Stronger Communities
 - Healthier Communities and Older People
 - Children and Young People
 - Economic Development and Enterprise.
4. In addition to Government guidance on the overall framework and focus of the LAA, there is also, for each of the 4 blocks, a set of mandatory outcomes that must be included within the agreement, in addition to any priorities that emerge locally. Following the June report, the Council together with representatives from the Dudley Community Partnership have been working on the detailed aspects of preparing a draft. The full draft document has been made available in the Members Library, and

is also to view through the LAA section of the Dudley Community Partnership website www.dcp.dudley.gov.uk .

5. The overall vision outlined in the draft LAA is based on the creation of stronger communities, the overriding aim established in the Community Strategy 2005-2006 launched in March 2006. In addition to the specific focus of the individual block themes, the draft LAA has proposed three overall issues to provide a consistent context for each individual block, these are:-
 - Closing the Gap – A recognition that there are neighbourhoods within the Borough that experience a combination of problems that are significantly worse than those in other areas and the importance for the LAA to address this need.
 - Community cohesion – A recognition the LAA can support the development of greater fairness, interaction and a common sense among residents.
 - Community engagement – Building upon the engagement achieved through the Community Strategy and the drafting of the LAA, a recognition that there is a great potential among voluntary and community groups to contribute even more to well-being in the Borough.
6. Following the preparation of this draft LAA document, the next phase involves the establishment of detailed action plans to achieve the proposed outcomes as well as the negotiation with Government on the context of the draft, to result in a further draft being produced by December 8th 2006.

Finance

7. Through the LAA programme the Government has identified a range of national funding streams which will be pooled within the Agreement, with the potential for greater flexibility in local determination of how to use this funding. In addition mainstream funding can also be identified and aligned to LAA outcomes, although this funding will be subject to existing terms and conditions. Through the work on the development of the LAA, the Council and its partners will be establishing which pooled funds apply to Dudley, the scope for identifying additional aligned funding, and the opportunities to support agreed priority outcomes.

Law

8. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, enables the Council to do any thing which it considers likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of the borough.

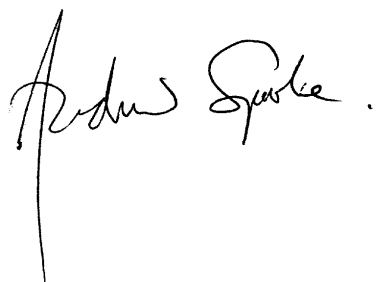
Equality Impact

9. The development of the LAA is being undertaken jointly with partners, including representatives of the voluntary and community sector, and children and young people. The aim is to ensure that we build upon the achievements in community inclusion made in developing the Dudley Borough Challenge. In addition the focus of many outcomes will explicitly address the needs for improved outcomes for communities experiencing disadvantage and discrimination.

Recommendation

10. It is recommended that:-

- The Cabinet consider the draft LAA, and the requirements to develop this draft for the next stage of submission by December 2006.



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Chief Executive

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List of Background Papers

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