

LEICESTERSHIRE TOGETHER (LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP) BOARD

Monday 3rd September 2007

DEVELOPING THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND SECOND LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

Report of Leicestershire County Council

Purpose of the Report

1. To clarify the purpose and structure of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and the second Local Area Agreement (LAA) and raise some key questions for discussion.
2. To update Board members on progress in developing the SCS and LAA.

The Structure of the SCS and Local Area Agreement

3. Appendices 1 and 2 set out, in diagrammatical form, current thinking around the structure of the SCS and LAA. Not surprisingly they are in many ways very similar to the existing documents and other strategies and plans. However the Local Government Bill, introducing a new style LAA from 2008 and a new local inspection regime from 2009, places new requirements on the SCS and LAA.

How the LAA will be different

4. There are a number of significant differences:
 - a. The Government is providing a list of 200 indicators for LCC and its partners to measure annually. From this it seeks to negotiate around 50 targets for the LAA.
 - b. The LAA will be the key piece of evidence for the future assessment of the County Council, the Police, the PCTs and other partners within Leicestershire Together. This process will be called the Comprehensive Area Assessment and is implemented from 2009 onwards.
 - c. Therefore the key priorities for Leicestershire will be aligned directly to the core activities of public sector organisations within Leicestershire Together.
 - d. Named partners have a statutory duty to co-operate with the County Council in preparing the LAA
 - e. There is a single pot of funding for the LAA to supplement the use of mainstream funds and this single pot will not be ring fenced to specific purposes.
 - f. Indicators within the LAA will be at a higher level. For example if there is to be an indicator on incapacity benefit (IB) it is likely to change from the existing indicator, about a specific project supporting people to come off incapacity benefit, to an indicator about the net reduction in IB claimants within Leicestershire.

Discussion Points and Key Decisions in developing the SCS and LAA

5. The changes to the SCS and LAA raise some questions about how the transition to the new framework is to be made and a number of issues for discussion and resolution.
6. Prioritisation There will be a temptation for many stakeholders to want to see 'their bit' in the strategy. It needs to be understood that the SCS and LAA will focus on the priorities for Leicestershire and should not contain references to every possible activity, organisation/partnership and service area in the County. This does not mean other priorities are not important or that suddenly services not mentioned in the SCS/LAA will/should stop being delivered.
7. Negotiation In negotiating the new LAA local partners can expect central government to apply the same rigour and challenge to our priorities as has previously been applied in negotiating the reward (or stretch) targets. Therefore Leicestershire Together needs to have a compelling case based on evidence as to what the priorities are for Leicestershire and what target figures should be aimed at.
8. Single Pot The single pot is assumed to be flexible and aligned with the priorities within the LAA. Decisions will need to be taken about the future commissioning framework for the single pot and the LAA and the timescale for the transition to new arrangements. Some existing projects and programmes are currently supported through funding that is proposed for the single pot. How are decisions to be made about the future of those existing projects? Should they be given 6 to 12 months notice while a commissioning framework is developed? What other options might exist?
9. Performance Management Owing to the new importance of the LAA in terms of inspection, the performance management framework will need to be further strengthened to enable appropriate levels of challenge within the partnership. The new framework will need to balance a range of information affecting performance, including user information This is currently being considered within a current LCC review of performance management arrangements and the recommendations from the review will be brought to the partnership.
10. Efficiency and De-commissioning Within this new scenario the efficiency pressures on public sector bodies are moved more clearly into the partnership arena. Partners will increasingly start to consider shared services options and in focusing on LAA priorities will need to consider what may need de-commissioning to enable the commissioning of new services.

Timescales and Key Stages for Developing the Local Area Agreement

11. A timetable for SCS and LAA development is attached as Appendix 3 with some information on the activities required by partners and key deadlines. The LT Board will have a number of opportunities to contribute between September 2007 and April 2008 when the process is expected to finish.

12. Principally the main activities requested of the Board are:

- Stage 2: 3rd to 26th October - Comment on the evidence base to assist in the development of the first draft priorities
- Stage 5: 12th November to 18th January – Ensure that each organisation/partnership comments on the first draft of the SCS as part of the public consultation process
- Stage 9 : 2nd April to June – Sign-off the final versions of the SCS and LAA

11. Work is currently focusing on the drafting of the evidence base reports (focussing on “place” and “people and themes”), which will be completed by the end of September.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Notes the proposed timetable for the development of the new LAA and SCS and its role within the process;**
- b) Discusses the questions raised with regard to the transition to the new performance framework and makes comments as appropriate for the attention of SSOG (the Strategic Senior Officers' Group) and other operational bodies.**

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