

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE: 8 FEBRUARY 2006

Report of Head of Policy and Performance

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Joanna Lewin-Harris)

Somerset Local Area Agreement

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek Executive approval of the Somerset Local Area Agreement (LAA).

Executive Summary

Local Area Agreements (LAAs) enable localities to determine outcomes for their area and negotiate with the Government a range of 'freedoms and flexibilities' to ensure achievement of these.

Somerset is in the second phase of a national roll-out of LAAs. The process of developing the Somerset LAA started in July 2005 and will be signed off by Government in March 2006.

The Council has played an important part in the development of the LAA, with officers and members giving input at various stages along the way.

2. Background

- 2.1 An LAA is a three year agreement setting out the priority outcomes for a local area and how these might effectively be addressed, for example by alignment of existing budgets and greater freedom and flexibility on certain national legislation and controls. The LAA is being developed by the Somerset Strategic Partnership, with input from various local partners, including district councils. The process of developing the LAA has involved numerous 'negotiation' meetings with Government Office for the South West (GOSW) and Government ministers will sign the final agreement in March 2006.
- 2.2 LAAs represent an important strand in recent Government thinking about the local governance and service delivery. Somerset is in 'phase two' of a national roll-out of LAAs that will cover all parts of the Country by 2008.

- 2.3 LAAs are organised around four main 'blocks':
- **Children and Young People**
 - **Healthier Communities and Older People**
 - **Safer and Stronger Communities**
 - **Economic Development and Enterprise**
- 2.4 Remaining consistent with these nationally determined blocks, the Somerset LAA has split the 'Healthier Communities' and 'Older People' into two and adopted 'Stronger Communities' as a cross-cutting theme.
- 2.5 The second draft of the Somerset LAA is attached as Appendix A. A newsletter on recent developments with the LAA is also attached as Appendix B. A 40-page appendix is also available via the hyperlink contained in the attached newsletter, and members are advised to view this document. Somerset County Council has established a dedicated LAA website and members are invited to view this for further background information:
www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset/council/localareaagreement/
- 2.6 The Council's approach to giving input to the LAA so far has involved a number of key elements:
- Attendance at stakeholder events hosted by the Somerset Strategic Partnership
 - Representation on the various groups responsible for developing different 'blocks' of the LAA
 - Representation on the Somerset Strategic Partnership
 - Scrutiny of different aspects of the emerging LAA by the relevant Review Panel and officers across the Council. A summary of the views submitted from members and officers is attached as Appendix C.
 - Final scrutiny of the LAA by the Review Board on 26 January 2006. The Review Board requested a greater emphasis on the importance of culture within the LAA and proposed that the following wording be forwarded to the project team:

"Since the tourism industry in all areas of Somerset is important and depends to a great extent on the cultural aspects of the County, these need to be supported."

3. The Current Position

- 3.1 A final draft of the LAA will be presented to the Somerset Strategic Steering Group for 'sign-off' on 14 February 2006. Final agreement with GOSW will be sought immediately after 14 February and a ministerial decision is anticipated by 24 March 2006. The LAA will be 'live' on 1 April 2006.

3.2 Arrangements for ensuring the effective governance and performance management of the LAA are currently under review and will continue to be developed early in the life of the agreement. The Government has recently launched a consultation on the future of local strategic partnerships (LSPs), mindful of their key role in delivering LAAs. Against this background, the Council and Taunton Deane LSP will play a part in future discussions concerning governance and performance management of the LAA.

3.3 An important part of the LAA consists of a 'reward grant', payable to local authorities in two ways:

- A pump-priming grant to help establish actions which will assist in the delivery of specified 'stretch targets'
- A 'Performance Reward Grant' which is paid on successful completion of the targets. The grant is paid in two parts in years 4 and 5, following completion of the 3-year agreement.

A draft set of stretch targets can be found in the Appendix to the LAA, available through the links in the attached newsletter (Appendix B). A clear formula for dividing up any reward grant payable on successful achievement of these targets is being developed and will be agreed by officers during 2006.

4. Links to Corporate Strategy

4.1 The draft Corporate Strategy 2006-09 was considered by the Review Board on 3 November 2005 and also appears on this agenda of the Executive. Some of the aims proposed in the draft Corporate Strategy have a particularly strong link to certain outcomes in the draft Local Area Agreement, as shown below.

Corporate Strategy Aim	LAA Outcomes
Economy – regenerating Taunton and strengthening the economy of the Borough	All under 'Economic Development and Enterprise' block Also links to 'Stronger Communities' outcome of 'helping to reduce poverty by maximising take-up of specific welfare benefits'
Crime – promoting safer communities and tackling anti-social behaviour	All under 'Safer Communities' block
Health – promoting healthy and sustainable communities	Links with 'Healthy Communities' block and 'Stronger Communities' outcome of 'maximising opportunities to meet the affordable housing needs of communities in Somerset'

5.0 Resource Implications

- 5.1 Aside from the reward grant mentioned earlier in this report, there are no new monies identified for delivering the LAA. However, achieving the outcomes in the draft LAA depends on a high level of partnership working and, where appropriate, alignment of budgets between agencies.
- 5.2 Partners have agreed to explore the scope to align budgets where appropriate, in the first year of the LAA. A joint definition of aligning budgets has been agreed as a guide to decision making:

“Aligning budgets is a voluntary agreement to use individually set and determined budgets on agreed joint targets and priorities contained within the LAA”

- 5.3 There are no elements of the draft LAA that will place new demands on the Council’s overall revenue and capital budget.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 The Executive is **recommended** to
- (i) Consider the specific proposal of the Review Board to improve reference to culture within the LAA.
 - (ii) Approve the LAA and commit the Council to applying best endeavours to ensure its delivery.
 - (iii) Note the ongoing work required in respect of governance and performance management arrangements, reward grant criteria and alignment of budgets, and agree that the Chief Executive or appropriate delegated officer represents the Council in future discussions about these issues.

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Local Area Agreement Briefing January 2006



[This Briefing](#)

Welcome to the January 2006 issue of the Somerset Local Area Agreement (LAA) Briefing newsletter. This is the fifth such newsletter produced, copies of the earlier newsletters can be found on the website at:

<http://www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset/council/localareaagreement/> . On the website you will find details of relevant documents, including previous Newsletters, together with a copy of the [first draft LAA](#), the [second draft LAA](#), [appendices](#) and a [Summary of the current second draft](#) of the LAA.

[Key Milestones for the Project](#)

Since the last newsletter in November there has again been a considerable amount of progress. A first draft LAA was submitted to GOSW and was considered by the Leaders and Chief Executives of the County and five Borough/District Councils. The feedback from the latter meeting and from other partners was that the LAA needed to be considerably shorter. The second draft of the LAA seeks to achieve that although it needs to be borne in mind that the LAA is something requiring not only the commitment of partners but also the approval of the GOSW and, in turn, Ministers. Thus any final document needs to represent a sensible compromise between these potentially conflicting demands. During January and early February further work will concentrate on:

- Finalisation of targets and the LAA Reward Element (e.g. the successor to the Local Public Service Agreement)
- Finalisation of the budget and financial information relevant to each outcome so we have a clear idea who is committing what finance to what outcome from the LAA.
- Editing the current draft down further.
- Ensuring we have robust data linked to adequate performance management and governance. These are all items which will require more work but it is important that there is sufficient information in place for GOSW and the ODPM to be able to assess progress against outcomes and for them to be satisfied that controls and checks on performance are in place through the relevant partnerships. The performance management and the governance issues, in the medium to long term, are tied up together and a comprehensive system for monitoring and 'governing' the LAA will emerge from work to be carried out over the next few months and agreed with partners.
- Achieving final approval of the various theme elements to the LAA through the various partnerships Boards/bodies who have developed it so far.
- Freedoms and Flexibilities – finalisation of detail

As stated above work on the ultimate governance and performance management arrangements for the LAA will require more work which will extend beyond the date of commencement of the LAA. This work will include consideration of the implications of the recent Government consultation paper '*Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their Future – a consultation paper*' which is available on the ODPM website at <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1162320> . One interesting feature of the LAA is that it has identified a number of important issues which will require further attention through partnership working but can not be addressed before the commencement of the current LAA (i.e. 1st April 2006). Provision does exist, however, to review the LAA (although not the reward element) during the three year period of the LAA. We have stated in our drafts so far that we will seek to identify and address these issues through a **Statement of Intent** agreed with partners. This **Statement of Intent** will be developed from late March (once the current work on the LAA has been finalised) onwards for a period of approximately 6 months. Further details of this process will be forthcoming in the next few weeks

A quick checklist of LAA progress is outlined below:

✓	August 2005: Project Plan Developed
✓	End of September: Outline of the long list of LAA outcomes submitted to GOSW
✓	End of October: Outline of LAA Targets submitted to GOSW
✓	6th November: Outline of Freedoms and Flexibilities submitted to GOSW
✓	7th November: Consultation Event with VCS, Fivehead Village Hall
✓	11th November: SSP Stakeholder consultation
✓	End of November: First Draft of LAA including priorities for reward element
✓	5th January 2006: Second LAA Draft and appendices submitted to GOSW
	30th January: Further Draft of LAA
	14th February: Special SSP Steering Group to sign off LAA
	End of February: Final Agreed LAA
	24th March : Ministerial Decision on LAA
	April 2006: LAA goes Live

[For Further Information](#)

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TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL (TDBC)

Input to the Somerset Local Area Agreement – November 2005

The Somerset Local Area Agreement (LAA) is being discussed at various officer and member meetings within TDBC over the period October 2005 – February 2006. A list of key meetings is attached.

Meetings to date have looked primarily at the 'long-list' of priority outcomes and sought to identify the key issues for TDBC, as input to the preparation of the LAA. The following is a summary of the main points raised so far, with comments where appropriate. The summary will be added to as debate continues within TDBC.

Comments are designed to feed into the selection of 'stretch targets' for the reward grant element of the LAA, as well as the preparation of the wider LAA.

LAA Theme	TDBC priorities (based on submitted LAA long-list)	Comments
Children and Young People	Outcome 1 most important – “improve emotional, physical and mental health of children and young people ...”	Post 16 'at risk' age group a particular priority, relating to teenage pregnancy, drop out rates, drugs anti-social behaviour and 'diversionary activities'. Teenage conceptions in Halcon ward = highest in Somerset. Needs to feature in LAA.
Safer Communities	Top priorities for TDBC include reducing violence (particularly relating to night time economy), reducing anti-social behaviour and reducing fear of crime. These priorities feature in our draft Corporate Strategy (2006-09) and are borne out by statistical trends and consultation with the public (available on request).	
Healthier Communities	Would support a stronger focus on role of physical exercise across all age groups as a means to reduce obesity, CHD, strokes, improve mental health etc.	Halcon ward's high level of teenage pregnancy needs to feature in LAA (see also Children and Young People) Focus on areas of deprivation would add most value.

LAA Theme	TDBC priorities (based on submitted LAA long-list)	Comments
Economic Development and Enterprise	<p>TDBC draft Corporate Strategy supports LAA outcome 12 – “increase enterprise and economic opportunity in areas of high deprivation”</p> <p>More input to follow from Review Panel Scrutiny on 17 November.</p>	<p>Halcon and Lyngford wards are hotspots within Taunton Deane, ranking relatively high on local and national indices of deprivation.</p>
Stronger Communities	<p>Voluntary and community sector (VCS) noted as critical partners across LAA.</p> <p>Focus (within stretch targets) on reducing poverty through increased benefit take-up, links well to TDBC focus on reducing deprivation in target wards.</p>	<p>TDBC support the emerging focus on VCS development across County.</p>
Older People		<p>TDBC supports and wishes to be an active partner in delivering the POPP bid, which will feature as part of the LAA</p>
Affordable Housing	<p>TDBC’s draft Corporate Strategy aligns well with proposed LAA outcomes 1 and 3, ie:</p> <p>“Increase the supply of affordable homes”, and</p> <p>“Tackle homelessness”</p> <p>Targets for these have been set and are available on request.</p>	
Transport	<p>TDBC’s draft Corporate Strategy will establish targets for reducing the growth in traffic congestion and reducing the proportion of commuter journeys made by car.</p>	<p>TDBC sees transport and access to services as a primary contributor to economy, health, safety. Outcomes need to be more explicit in the LAA</p>

14 November 2005