

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR – HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
TO THE EXECUTIVE
4 APRIL 2008

Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement 2

1.0 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 This report provides information about Oxfordshire's next local area agreement (LAA2).
- 1.2 The contact officers for this report are Toby Warren, Head of Community Strategy, tel. 01235 547695; and Paul Staines, Deputy Director, Housing and Community Safety, tel. 01235 547621.

2.0 Recommendations

That the Executive:

- (a) *Endorse the priorities within Oxfordshire's next local area agreement.*
- (b) *Give delegated authority for the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Chief Executive, to agree targets for the priorities.*

3.0 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

- 3.1 This report supports the Council's Vision and Priorities. It also supports the Vale Community Strategy. It does not conflict with any Council strategy or policy.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are three-year agreements between the Government and key partners which set out the priorities for improvement in a local area. They should help to join up public services and improve service delivery. LAAs are set at a county or unitary level and should reflect the views of all partners, including district councils.
- 4.2 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a statutory requirement on local authorities to co-operate in negotiating and delivering an LAA.
- 4.3 In Oxfordshire the negotiations with Government are being led by the Public Services Board (PSB) on behalf of the Oxfordshire Partnership.
- 4.4 The Oxfordshire Partnership is the county local strategic partnership and brings together the public, private and voluntary sectors in order to improve the social economic and environmental well-being of Oxfordshire.

- 4.5 The Public Service Board is made up of representatives of the Oxfordshire Partnership including the District Council. The Leader of the Council sits as the Council's representative on the Public Service Board and Oxfordshire Partnership.
- 4.6 From 1st April 2008 the Government will measure local area performance using 198 national indicators (which replace all other Government indicators e.g. best value performance indicators); up to 35 indicators (plus 16 statutory education and early years indicators) must be selected as local priorities for performance improvement. The 35 indicators should be the most important indicators for Oxfordshire (so reflect the type of area and the particular issues the county faces e.g. lack of affordable housing).
- 4.7 In return for an agreement to improve performance the Government is allowing local areas more freedom in spending decisions. The Government has reduced the number of specific ring-fenced grants and has amalgamated them into the 'area based grant' (which includes previously ring-fenced grants e.g. the safer and stronger communities fund) so that partners can decide how to spend this money locally. The priorities that make up LAA2 will inform how area based grant is spent. The County Council is the accountable body for area based grant.

5.0 LAA2 Priorities

- 5.1 The appendix to this report contains the shortlist of LAA2 priorities agreed by the Oxfordshire Partnership on 7th March. District Councils in Oxfordshire have worked together to ensure that LAA2 contains priorities that are important for the districts as well as the County. This bid will be finalised at the PSB meeting in April.
- 5.2 The PSB now needs to agree targets for each priority. The PSB will reserve the right to withdraw a priority from the shortlist if it is not possible to agree achievable targets with the Government Office for the South East (acting on behalf of central government).
- 5.3 LAA2 negotiations should be completed by June 2008.

6.0 Financial implications

- 6.1 Agreeing LAA2 has no immediate financial implications for the Council. If in the future the Council decides to commit funding to LAA2 priorities any decisions should be made through the normal budget setting process.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 LAA2 identifies the key priorities for Oxfordshire and will provide a framework to work in partnership to improve local services. Oxfordshire County Council is the lead organisation for LAA2 and has worked closely with other statutory organisations and the voluntary sector to develop a set of priorities which reflect the areas for improvement in the county over the next three years.
- 7.2 From April 2009, Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will replace Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). CAA will look at the public services in an area delivered by councils and their partners including the private and voluntary sectors. It will recognise the importance of effective local partnership working and the enhanced role of the Community Strategies and the importance of

councils in leading and shaping the communities they serve. Performance against the agreed LAA targets will be a key factor in this assessment.

- 7.3 Officers envisage that a further report on the LAA will be tabled later in the year once the priorities and associated targets are finalised that will set out the commitments the Council has made to the targets within the LAA

8.0 Notification of Briefing on LAA

- 8.1 Members might like to be made aware of a seminar being run by the County Council on the development of both the Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Local Area Agreement.. The purpose of these briefings is to provide information on how the County Sustainable Communities Strategy is being developed and will be delivered through partnership working using the Local Area Agreement and the Sustainable Community Strategy Delivery Plan.
- 8.2 The seminar is being held at the Abingdon Four Pillars Hotel on Thursday 10 April. 3pm-5pm. Members can book a place by e-mailing oxfordshirepartnership@oxfordshire.gov.uk with your name, organisation, contact details and any particular access or dietary requirements.

PAUL STAINES
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY)

Appendix: Indicator List agreed by Oxfordshire Partnership on 7 March 2008