

LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS
(Report by the Head of Policy)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Cambridgeshire is one of the areas in the East of England Region which has been selected by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to participate in the second phase of developing Local Area Agreements (LAA). The Agreements are an initiative intended to streamline Government funding, to encourage more partnership working – particularly through Local Strategic Partnerships – and to ensure investment is directed towards local priorities. The LAAs build on the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) concept to improve services through targeted prioritisation of funding.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

- 2.1 The process for developing LAAs requires both extensive partnership consultation and engagement while at the same time imposes a very restricted timetable. Work to date, therefore, has concentrated on using the five Community Strategies which exist in Cambridgeshire to identify local priorities and the objectives and themes from those Strategies have been incorporated into a draft LAA. This draft has been subject to some preliminary consultation with agencies across Cambridgeshire and has now been submitted to the Government Office for review. (A copy is appended.) A final draft will be submitted to Cabinet in February 2006 for endorsement.

3. STRUCTURE OF THE LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

- 3.1 The format of the Agreement is largely defined by the Government and includes an introduction to the area; a joint vision for improving the quality of life; aims, objectives and cross-cutting themes; partnership arrangements; and the priority outcomes for each of four “blocks” —
- children and young people;
 - safer and stronger communities;
 - healthy communities and older people (two distinct subjects);
 - economic development and enterprise.
- 3.2 As an LPSA is already in place in Cambridgeshire, the topics and stretching targets in that agreement are automatically incorporated within the LAA.

4. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 In the absence of a county-wide Local Strategic Partnership, the Agreement must be accompanied by agreed governance arrangements. While partner organisations will still be responsible for individual decision making, for an initial 12 months trial period these arrangements will include —

- a Local Area Agreement Board with approximately 12 members drawn from the County and District Councils/Local Strategic Partnerships, health, the Police, business and the voluntary sector; and
- a supporting Local Area Agreement Reference Group, including representatives of all District Councils, the Primary Care Trusts, the County Council, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, the voluntary sector, CALC, Job Centre Plus, the Learning Skills Council and Greater Cambridge Partnership.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The LAA offers the potential to both reduce the work associated with administering Government funding streams, to improve partnership working in the area and to ensure that funding is targeted to local priorities. However, the nature of the Agreement, and in particular the timescale in which it must be achieved, might mitigate against the setting of true local priorities in favour of broader regional or national priorities.

6. RECOMMENDATION

6.1 The Panel are invited to comment on the draft Agreement.

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Cambridgeshire Local Area Agreement draft

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