

Draft Cheshire Local Area Agreement– Progress Report & Next Steps

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to update the Communities of Cheshire Partnership on progress made towards the production of the final draft Cheshire Local Area Agreement since the submission of the first draft to GONW on 29 September 2006, to endorse the changes to the draft LAA made to date and to reach agreement on the suggested next steps required to meet the 20 December deadline for submission of the final draft LAA.

Summary

i) Feedback on the First Draft

- In accordance with the Government’s stipulated timetable for Round 3 Agreements, the first full draft LAA for Cheshire was submitted to GONW at close of business on 29 September.
- Electronic copies of the draft LAA were emailed on the same day to all relevant stakeholders and a copy was posted on the new Cheshire Partnerships Framework website (www.cpframework.org.uk).
- The draft built upon the “high level” outcomes framework submitted to GONW at the end of June derived from the district-based Local Strategic Partnerships and their respective community plans and strategies as well as the key thematic partnerships comprising the new Cheshire Partnerships Framework.
- Formal feedback on the draft was received from GONW on 18 October. Generally the feedback has been positive, reflecting the “enormous progress” made and making reference to the receipt of “some good independent feedback on the development of (your) partnership arrangements over the last year...” which “...has paid dividends.”
- However, further work was also highlighted in relation to:
 - the identification of funding streams to support the delivery of the sub-outcomes, particularly those to be pooled or aligned;
 - completion of gaps within the outcomes template;
 - potential continuation of current LPSA2 targets;
 - strengthening of the links underpinning cross cutting themes;
 - work with the voluntary, community and faith sectors and the statement of community involvement; and
 - further development of the performance management arrangements.
- An intermediate action plan to ensure that these points are addressed was produced and work to progress these areas has continued through the cross-authority LAA officer group and the LAA block leads.

ii) LAA Block Development

- Since submission of the first draft, the LAA block leads through their respective thematic partnerships, have continued to refine the introductory contextual statements and complete as much of the outcomes framework as possible.
- All changes to the document have been tracked and included in a version control statement at the back of the LAA. Published updates to the full LAA will continue to be posted on the Cheshire Partnerships Framework website so that all partners have access. Significant changes, including those already made and those proposed, will be highlighted at the meeting.
- The first formal meeting of the new Governance Board to the Cheshire Partnerships Framework to be held on 8 December will also consider this report.
- The five Cheshire-wide thematic partnership Chairmen and the LAA block leads will be invited to comment on the development of their respective blocks at the meeting.
- The intention remains to undertake a full Integrated Appraisal / Impact Assessment of the LAA to measure and challenge the positive and any potentially negative impact of the Agreement though this is likely to take place early in the new year.

iii) Geographical Targeting

- One of the main aims of the LAA is to co-ordinate partnership activity to improve the quality of life for people living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Cheshire.
- Whilst this is covered under Key Outcome 1 within the Safer and Stronger Communities block, there are many other aspects of the LAA where such targeting is required, e.g. health, education, employment, etc.
- It is therefore proposed that within the LAA, where such targeting is highlighted, as a minimum this activity be concentrated on those Cheshire wards containing Super Output Areas (SOAs) that fall within the top 20% overall in England within the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2004. These areas are listed in Appendix A to this report. It is also proposed that Congleton North ward be included in this list as it features highly in four of the seven individual domains within the IMD and, consequently, could slip into decline.
- It is intended that the development and refinement of specific targets for these areas will continue through the work of the thematic partnerships and will be incorporated within the first annual refresh of the LAA if not before.

iv) Performance Management (see Appendix B)

v) Statement of Community Involvement (to be reported verbally at the meeting)

vi) Negotiation Process

- GONW have continued to communicate feedback from central Government Departments through their ongoing dialogue with the LAA block leads.
- This process has also facilitated negotiation of the fine detail of the document, including baselines, targets, stretch, cross cutting activities and added value from the LAA, as well as the opportunity to share and understand delivery plans where they exist.

Next Steps

As previously reported, whilst significant progress continues to be made, there remains much to be done prior to submission of the final draft LAA by the end of the month. The document is being continually updated and, whilst individual partners have begun the process of taking the LAA through their respective decision-making and approvals procedures, a process to finalise the negotiations and ensure partner buy-in prior to submission needs to be clarified.

It has been suggested that the sub-group of the Communities of Cheshire Partnership, previously convened to agree the draft outcomes framework and the first full draft LAA, be reconvened and extended to include other key and interested partners, LAA block leads and the GONW negotiating team. Whilst this will inevitably be difficult to establish before the end of December deadline, partners views on this proposals will be invited.

Recommendations

That the Communities of Cheshire Partnership:

- (i) note the contents of this progress report;
- (ii) comment upon the content of the draft Agreement as developed to date and any amendments made;
- (iii) agree to the proposal in relation to geographical targeting;
- (iv) endorse the actions and proposals for the LAA performance management framework as highlighted in Appendix B; and
- (v) agree to the reformation and extension of the sub-group of the Communities of Cheshire Partnership to finalise the negotiations and endorse the content of the LAA prior to final submission.

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CHESHIRE WARDS TO BE USED AS THE BASIS FOR GEOGRAPHICAL TARGETING

Ward	Local authority
• Central	Ellesmere Port & Neston
• Grange	Ellesmere Port & Neston
• Pooltown	Ellesmere Port & Neston
• Rivacre	Ellesmere Port & Neston
• Stanlow & Wolverham	Ellesmere Port & Neston
• Westminster	Ellesmere Port & Neston
• Blacon Hall	Chester
• Blacon Lodge	Chester
• Lache Park	Chester
• Northwich Castle	Vale Royal
• Northwich Witton	Vale Royal
• Winsford Over	Vale Royal
• Winsford Swanlow	Vale Royal
• Winsford Verdin	Vale Royal
• Winsford Wharton	Vale Royal
• Alexandra	Crewe and Nantwich
• Coppenhall	Crewe and Nantwich
• Delamere	Crewe and Nantwich
• Grosvenor	Crewe and Nantwich
• Maw Green	Crewe and Nantwich
• St Barnabas	Crewe and Nantwich
• Congleton North	Congleton
• Handforth	Macclesfield
• Macclesfield South	Macclesfield

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Robust performance management arrangements are highlighted as an essential requirement in the LAA guidance. They will also be critical to the efficient and effective delivery of the agreement. As a result, the following developments have occurred.

1. Performance management framework

Cheshire County Council has produced a performance management framework (PMF) document which is included in the latest draft of the LAA. It outlines the principles behind performance management, the responsibilities of various individuals, groups and partnerships, the reporting cycle, arrangements to manage underperformance, and the potential system used to support the framework.

The central message of the PMF document is that each of the 54 sub outcomes will be assigned a named individual or 'owner'. The owner will be responsible for coordinating the performance monitoring and management of the particular sub outcome. This involves:

- collecting the data required to inform performance indicators
- measuring the progress of performance indicators
- developing an action plan
- measuring the progress of actions
- recording this information through a performance management system

The progress of such sub outcomes will be used to measure the progress of the thematic blocks and the LAA as a whole.

The PMF document was shared with the LAA Group and the CPPG and the overall approach was endorsed. The PMF was slightly amended to note the extra support that the community and voluntary sector may require to meet these performance management arrangements.

2. Prioritising sub outcomes

The PMF document refers to the need to prioritise certain sub outcomes to make the management of performance both manageable and appropriate. It was felt that without such prioritisation, efforts to manage sub outcomes that were underperforming would be disproportionate as some sub outcomes are mandatory and, in the case of LPSA targets, have funding implications, while other sub outcomes may not carry the same importance.

The LAA group have endorsed this approach and agreed that there would be two levels of priority: Priority One sub outcomes (mandatory and LPSA2 targets) and Priority Two sub outcomes (the rest of the LAA).

It must be stressed that Priority Two sub outcomes will still be monitored, managed, and expected to be delivered. Priority One sub outcomes will be subject to stronger

scrutiny, challenge, and support from thematic partnerships particularly in cases of under performance.

3. Identifying sub outcome owners

Named individuals, responsible for the collection of data for each indicator, have been identified. The next vital stage will be identifying sub outcome owners. It has been agreed through the LAA Group and the CPPG that this will be done by Block Lead Officers.

4. Role of the Cheshire Performance Practitioners Group (CPPG)

The CPPG have been identified in the PMF and elsewhere in the LAA draft as a support organisation. A key role for the group is supporting and challenging block writing groups and sub outcome owners in developing SMART indicators and action plans and developing more localised targets where necessary. The CPPG have nominated a number of its members to take on this 'critical friend' role for each of the block writing groups.

5. Feasibility study for a LAA performance management system

Excelcis is a user-friendly, web based system that is currently being used by Cheshire County Council to monitor and manage corporate performance.

The system enables both qualitative and quantitative data to be captured and regularly reviewed.

In regard to the performance management of the LAA, the system has the potential to minimise bureaucracy, improve efficiency, and promote information sharing across all partners in Cheshire. There is capacity for data to be updated quarterly as a minimum to ensure progress and performance information is at all times up to date and accurate. The system will also be able to demonstrate the 'golden thread' running from the overall LAA to individual actions – a valuable tool when working in partnership.

Cheshire County Council Information Systems and the Performance Improvement Service are currently conducting a feasibility exercise into Excelcis being used as the system underpinning the PMF.

The exercise is nearing completion. A test system has been established, amended to reflect the structure of the LAA and has been populated with three sample sub outcomes. The test system will be demonstrated to the LAA group on the 7 December 2006. The feasibility study will be completed once sub outcome owners have been identified and the scale of external access has been established.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Communities of Cheshire Partnership endorse the actions and proposals set out in this paper for the LAA performance management framework.