

Report to: **Executive**  
Date: **20 May 2008**  
Report of: **Leader of the Council**  
Subject: **County Durham Local Area Agreement 2008**  
Ward: **All**

## **1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To seek formal sign-up to the new Local Area Agreement for County Durham which has been developed during 2007/8.

## **2.0 Consultation**

- 2.1 The first Local Area Agreement (LAA) was signed by partners and Ministers in March 2006, following an inclusive priority setting process, ensuring that it was developed in partnership and involving a number of representatives from the Council. This methodology has continued for the new Local Area Agreement which has engaged various Officers and Members, including the Leader and Deputy Leader, Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive, Director of Regeneration, Director of Community Services, Principal Corporate Development Officer, LSP Manager and Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder Manager.
- 2.2 The first LAA had been welcomed by partners as an opportunity to ensure a shared understanding of national priorities and to develop a shared clarity of thinking around local priorities. It was also seen as a means to shape a more integrated approach to local service delivery. On that basis, the Council has engaged with the process and Easington has been well represented at consultation events.

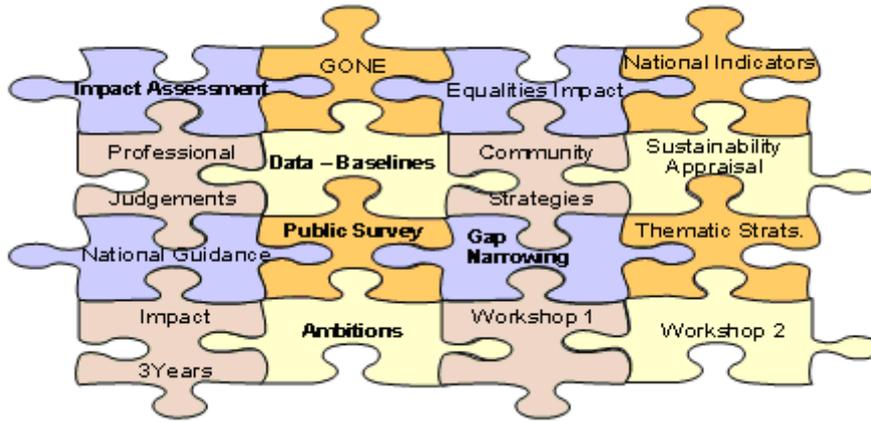
## **3.0 Background**

- 3.1 LAAs are three year, negotiated statutory agreements between central & local government (top tier councils with their partners). They provide an interface between national and local priorities, and are based on a series of three year outcomes and targets. The LAA is based on the objectives in the longer term Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA translates these into targets to secure the improvements local people want to see. They incorporate a number of “stretch” targets, which are particularly demanding and attract a performance reward grant if they are met.
- 3.2 The Government’s white Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* set out a new model for Local Area Agreements, putting them at the heart of the new Performance Framework. The resulting statute, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007, introduced a duty for Local authorities to agree the priorities in the LAA, introducing a formal framework to ensure co-operation with local partners. This new “responsible body” role, emphasizing Local Authorities as “first among equals” reflects a shift change from the original thinking (“accountable body”) around the Agreements; however the issue of multiple accountability across all partners still holds strong.
- 3.3 In accordance with this framework, new LAAs should include ‘up to 35’ targets which local authorities and their partners negotiate with Central Government drawn from the new national indicator set of 198 indicators. In addition to ‘up to 35’ targets, all areas will also agree 16 statutory education and early years targets with Government. The local authority and its partners also have the discretion to set additional “local” targets for inclusion in the LAA.

- 3.4 The new LAA is underpinned by a number of important principles, to ensure that its key themes address the issues of:
- Place shaping – it should reflect the partners’ Vision of the kind of place County Durham should be, and what will make it different and unique from other places;
  - Gap narrowing – to reduce inequalities between different parts of the County and different sections of the community;
  - Equality and inclusion – working to ensure that all individuals and communities are equally valued and treated fairly with services that are accessible and relevant to their needs;
  - Sustainability – to have long lasting benefits for current residents and future generations and to ensure that some issues or localities are improved at the expense of others; this includes looking at the particular needs, for example of rural areas, and the impact of actions on other areas of work or on particular geographic communities or communities of interest.
  - Aspirations – aiming to excel in certain fields, setting challenging but realistic goals, so that County Durham is known for its outstanding successes.
- 3.5 Area based funds to target specific areas of need will still exist, albeit they are treated as part of mainstream budgets, forming part of the financial settlement; the issue for the Partnership will be to ensure that resources are aligned to deliver the outcomes within the Local Area Agreement.

#### **4.0 The County Durham Local Area Agreement**

- 4.1 Work to agree the priorities and outcomes for the Durham Local Area Agreement, shown in **Appendix 1** to this report, was based on an inclusive and evidence based approach, through a single integrated process, involving a wide range of stakeholders from statutory, voluntary and business organisations and existing partnerships from across the County. The overall aim was to present robust evidence from a wide variety of sources including statistical data, research findings, views from Government and survey results, and through an iterative process of debate and discussion to reach a consensus on a framework of outcomes which partners believe will bring about long term change. This work also explicitly built upon local priorities identified in community strategies including that of East Durham.
- 4.2 Initially a great number of outcomes were included and in order to further prioritise and refine the framework a number of methods were applied. This involved testing each suggested outcome in terms of its impacts on other outcomes being considered, its impact on sustainability, its impact on equality and diversity and also the breadth of consensus emerging about the importance of the issue. By fitting together all of these pieces of information, partners were more easily able to recognise the best likely combination of outcomes which would create the right picture for the future of County Durham. This information formed a jigsaw which was used to build up a rich picture of priority needs and aspirations in County Durham.

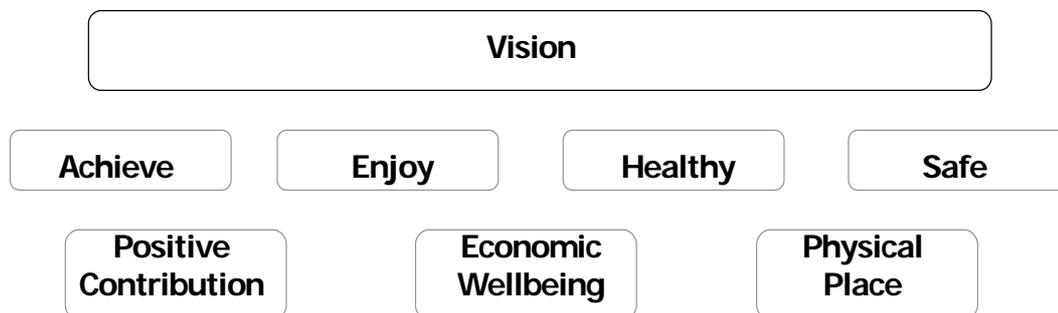


4.3 To support the process a number of workshops were held:

- Block Leads (There are 4 blocks - Children and Young People, Health and Older People, Stronger, Safer Communities and Economic Development) and LSP representatives – 18 July 2007
- Partner’s Workshop 1 – 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2007
- Partner’s Workshop 2 – 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007
- Block Leads and LSP representatives – 21 November 2007
- Partner’s Workshop 3 – 11<sup>th</sup> December 2007
- Partner’s workshop 4 – 29<sup>th</sup> January 2008
- Block Leads and LSP representatives agreed targets for indicators – February/March 2008

4.4 The development process has resulted in a comprehensive Outcomes Framework, mapping all of the outcomes and indicators related to the key themes identified. The emerging vision focuses on County Durham as a place where people are healthy and safe, able to enjoy and achieve, whilst making a positive contribution and enjoying economic well-being. As the “physical” place is also a key factor on our quality of life, issues such as affordable housing, a cleaner and greener environment and accessible transport are also given a focus.

The emergent themes are shown below:



- 4.5 In order to support delivery and management of each theme, a hierarchy of outcomes and indicators were then developed as follows:

Theme:				
Strategic Outcome	Strategic Indicator(s)	Contributory Outcome	Contributory Indicator(s)	Gap Narrowing Indicator(s)

Under each of the themes the Partnership has identified one or more high level strategic outcome, the key things that need to be achieved to make a difference. These are supported by contributory outcomes, which are more short term in focus, and the specific actions, which will lead to the achievement of our goals. Detailed delivery plans will be developed by partners, based on evidence of the kind of interventions that will bring about the change that is needed, addressing causes rather than symptoms and including the views of service users and the wider community, in agreeing what needs to be done.

- 4.6 Through the strong evidence base, a consensus of opinion was reached on the most pressing priorities. It was also agreed that the new Sustainable Community Strategy would capture the long-term preventative measures, to ensure that the LAA focused on the areas in need of immediate impact.

These outcomes have been agreed by partners and are based on an understanding of the issues facing people in different parts of County Durham, as set out in local Community Strategies. The Stretch targets within the document have also been negotiated with Government departments.

- 4.7 Several of the outcomes and targets are about narrowing the gap in terms of deprivation.
- 4.8 The Council has continued to take a very active role in the development of the new Agreement, and Officers will take this forward within the new arrangements for the Unitary Council as it plays a key role in Comprehensive Area Assessment, Partnership working and Locality arrangements.

## **5. Implications**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

The report has no direct financial implications; however as highlighted in the report, there is the issue of utilising Area Based Grants, which are now maintained within existing Service Delivery mainstream budgets to ensure that resources are aligned to the delivery plans of the Local Area Agreement. In order to ensure the Partnership delivers on these priority areas, the ongoing work to finalise the commissioning arrangements and performance management framework will be crucial to this.

### **5.2 Legal Implications**

The new statutory guidance confers the responsible body role to Durham County Council and places a duty on the Council and partners to cooperate to deliver the outcomes set out in the LAA.

### **5.3 Policy Implications**

The LAA is a commitment to work together to achieve agreed outcomes, and these outcomes reflect the priorities of Easington as expressed in the Community Strategy and in some cases, those of the Council as set out in the Corporate Plan (for example, the BVPI around litter and detritus is a LAA target as well as being a target for this Council). The Council has sought to ensure that known local priorities and therefore policy initiatives are reflected in LAA outcomes and targets, and has built LAA targets into corporate plans where appropriate.

### **5.4 Risk Implications**

The risks associated with entering into a LAA have been considered .

### **5.5 Communications**

There has been regular communication with partners through the LSP as the Local Area Agreement has been developed. The Council may wish to consider how it wishes to communicate the Agreement with residents.

## **6 Corporate Implications**

### **6.1 Corporate Plan and Priorities**

The LAA does not impact on the corporate priorities other than to provide additional partnership opportunities for delivering them.

### **6.2 Service Plans**

Some of the targets in the LAA relate to the work of Council departments and will need to be incorporated into service plans.

### **6.3 Performance Management and Scrutiny**

Performance Management arrangements for the LAA are being developed in line with the LGR Policy and Partnerships Workstream. Monitoring of the whole LAA at the countywide level will continue, alongside ownership of specific targets at the local level; linking in with the Performance Management Frameworks of the LSPs.

### **6.4 Sustainability**

Many of the targets and outcomes within the LAA are related to developing sustainable communities in the widest sense.

### **6.5 Human Resource Implications**

The LAA has no direct HR implications. The Council has invested significant time in the development and implementation of the existing and new LAA which has impact on other work. It is considered that this level of engagement will continue in line with the development of the new governance and performance management arrangements.

## **6.6 Information Technology**

The County Durham E Government Partnership, of which the Council is part, is engaged with the LAA in terms of how e government can be used in its delivery.

## **6.7 Equality and Diversity**

The LAA aims to improve service delivery across all parts of the community.

## **6.8 Crime and Disorder**

The Stronger, Safer Communities block of the LAA is directly concerned with improving community safety. The targets within the LAA reflect issues and targets within the local Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy.

## **6.9 Human Rights**

There are no human rights implications.

## **6.10 Social Inclusion**

Several of the outcomes and targets relate to inclusion and tackling deprivation.

## **6.11 Procurement**

There are no procurement implications.

## **7 Local Government Review Implications**

The Responsible Body for the Local Area Agreement is Durham County Council, however, all partners, including the District Councils, have a “duty to cooperate”. The Local Area Agreement will be taken to the new Unitary Cabinet on 23<sup>rd</sup> May for “sign off”, before submission to Government Office. The Local Area Agreement is the delivery plan of the Durham County Sustainable Community Strategy, and will be a key document in Comprehensive Area Assessment. The County Durham Partnership has representation on several of the Local Government Review Workstreams to ensure their input to future changes in line with the new Council arrangements.

## **7 Recommendations**

Members are recommended to agree the new Local Area Agreement and empower officers to engage in the further development of the Agreement in terms of governance, funding and performance.

## **Background Papers**

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, 2007,