

## Report

To: **Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group**

From: **Jackie Fisk, Policy Officer (Local Area Agreement), BCC**

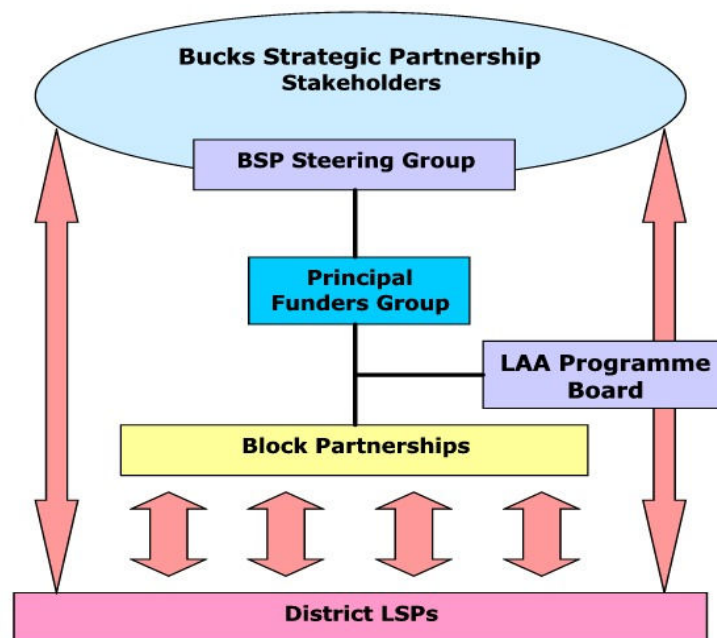
Re: **Local Area Agreement**

Date: 30 October 2007

1. The Buckinghamshire Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a 3-year agreement between partners in Buckinghamshire and central government. Basically, it is a delivery plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy; it sets out the shared outcomes towards which partners will work together to improve the quality of life for local residents. The agreement is refreshed each year. The theme of the Buckinghamshire LAA is 'Promoting Prosperity – Tackling Inequalities.' The LAA came into effect on 1 April 2006 and was refreshed in April 2007. It currently contains 79 indicators, some of which are mandatory targets.
2. The purpose of the LAA is to achieve better results for residents through smarter partnership working and by making the best use of the resources available.

## Governance

3. The current LAA governance arrangements are illustrated below (Please note that governance arrangements are currently under review):



4. The LAA is organised around 4 'blocks' although there is also wide-ranging cross-cutting activity:
  - Healthier Communities and Older People
  - Children and Young People

- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Economy and Environment

## **Performance Management**

5. The LAA has robust performance management arrangements, with clear lines of accountability. Each LAA indicator has a 'target owner' who is responsible for co-ordinating partnership activity to deliver the target. The target is performance-managed by Block Leads (drawn from County and District Councils, Thames Valley Police, Bucks Economic Partnership, Bucks PCT) who report on the performance of the block to the relevant partnership board. There is reporting by exception to the Principal Funders Group (PFG), which is the democratically accountable governance body for the LAA. The LAA Programme Board, whose members are senior officers from the local authorities and representatives from all key partners including the Voluntary and Community Sector, manages the operation of the LAA programme and advises the PFG.
6. Each indicator has a delivery plan, which sets out all partners contributing to delivery and the actions planned in order to achieve it. The plans are quality assured by the Block Leads and publicly available. There are quarterly performance monitoring reports, which are published and shared with partners and the Government Office for the South East. The transparency of the performance management arrangements has facilitated increasingly close partnership working over the last 18 months.

## **Progress after Year 1**

7. The progress identified by partners and GOSE after Year 1 includes:
  - Strengthened partnership working, but acknowledgement that it is early days in terms of seeing substantial difference on the ground.
  - Wide partnership buy-in to the LAA as the delivery mechanism for the priorities set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy
  - Improved partnership performance management
  - Capacity of partners to respond to priorities is targeted through the shared priorities set out in the LAA
  - Stronger involvement of the voluntary and community sector, but further development needed
  - Transparency over priorities and how they are being delivered
  - Shared partnership approach to consideration of issues such as Equalities and Diversity.

GOSE concluded that, in general, progress was being made on all blocks. It also recognised that a number of difficult and challenging targets had been set and that it would be unrealistic to expect these all to be met at this stage of the LAA. It recognised that some improved outcomes for the people of Buckinghamshire are already being recorded and that partners are working increasingly well together.

## **New LAA from 2008**

8. The Local Government White Paper sets out fundamentally different arrangements for the LAA.

- The LAA will be the only place where government will agree targets with Buckinghamshire.
- All areas will have to introduce a New LAA from 2008.
- Statutory responsibility on the County Council to consult and negotiate an LAA, duty on named partners to co-operate.
- New National Performance Framework – ‘National Indicator Set’ of 198 indicators on which an area will report on to government (and report to local residents).
- Of this 198, up to 35 will be prioritised and set out in the LAA, plus 17 statutory Early Years and Education targets.
- We can also have local targets of our choosing, but these will only be reported locally – not to government.
- More un-ringfenced funding – more freedom on spending decisions locally.
- There will be a ‘reward’ element – awaiting details from government in November.

There will be a consultation with all key partner organisations and the public on the priorities to be reflected in the New LAA from end October to end January.