

Cabinet – 3 February 2010

Local Area Agreement (LAA) – Refresh 2010

Portfolio: Councillor Mike Bird, Leader of the Council

Service: Walsall Partnership

Wards: All

Key Decision: No

Forward Plan: No

1. Summary of Report

- 1.1 Walsall's 2008-11 Local Area Agreement (LAA) was signed in June 2008. Normally the LAA process does not allow for refresh going into the final year of the agreement. This year however, Government has recognised the effect of recession on the achievability of a number of targets and has agreed to renegotiate these with local partnerships. Negotiations are on-going but approval by the responsible local authority is required before 12 March 2010 under a national agreement with local government. This report asks Cabinet to delegate final approval to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council for targets currently being negotiated through the Walsall Partnership with Government Office West Midlands (GOWM).

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Cabinet delegates approval of refreshed Local Area Agreement targets to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council. .

3. Background Information

- 3.1 This report has been sent to Cabinet as a late item in order to meet a deadline for submission of LAA refresh proposals to the Department of Communities and Local Government by 12 March 2010.
- 3.2 The LAA received Ministerial sign off in June 2008. It contains 25 main targets, against which the overall performance will be assessed by Government, and a further five 'local' indicators. Walsall's LAA is closely aligned to the delivery of the Borough's objectives as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council's corporate plan.
- 3.3 In normal circumstances going into the final year of the LAA targets would be 'locked down' to avoid either side proposing late changes that would influence the achievability of the LAA as a whole.
- 3.4 This year Government has identified a list of indicators that have been hit by the recession, four of which are included in Walsall's LAA:

NI 116 – proportion of children in poverty
NI 152 – proportion of people on out of work benefits
NI 154 – net additional homes
NI 172 – small businesses showing growth

- 3.5 National Indicators (NI) 116 and 152 – child poverty and people on out of work benefits will be subsumed by the City Region Multi Area Agreement (MAA) in the longer term but for this year negotiations are based largely on local factors. The targets proposed will be expressed in terms of the gap between Walsall and England and will take into account that Walsall has suffered more from the recession than other areas in the Region.
- 3.6 The proposal for NI 154 – net additional homes – will take into account the downturn in the private sector housing market and the local investment plan being prepared with the Homes and Communities Agency which will is likely to result in a limited amount of growth in the rented sector towards the end of the final year of the LAA.
- 3.7 For NI 172 – small businesses showing growth – in the light of recent evidence Walsall negotiated what remains a reasonably favourable target at the previous target setting stage. It is likely therefore that this will remain Walsall's position in the current round of negotiations.

4. Resource Considerations

4.1 Financial:

- 4.2 Success in meeting targets contained in the LAA will determine the level of Performance Reward Grant received by the Council. The Council and its partners are expected to align activity to deliver LAA indicators which support the outcomes contained in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Financial decisions should be mindful of this expectation.

4.3 Legal:

- 4.4 Walsall Partnership, as the Local Strategic Partnership, is expected by Government to lead on the development and refresh the LAA; the Council as Responsible Local Authority must approve refresh proposals.

4.5 Staffing:

- 4.6 No direct considerations

5.1 Citizen impact

- 5.1 There are a number of LAA indicators that have a direct impact on citizens.

6. Community safety

- 6.1 There are a number of LAA indicators that have a direct impact on community safety.

7. Environmental impact

- 7.1 There are a number of LAA indicators that have a direct impact on the environment.

8. Performance and risk management issues

- 8.1 Delivery of LAA targets will have a direct impact on the Council's rating under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment arrangements.
- 8.2 Performance of the LAA is managed through the structures of the Partnership with assistance from the Council's Corporate Performance Management Unit.

9. Equality implications

- 9.1 Where appropriate, equalities are measured across each indicator selected for the LAA. A requirement is included in the Target Action Planning process that ensures that data is collected on the equalities impact of all activity.

10. Consultation

- 10.1 LAA development and refresh has been driven by Walsall Partnership and therefore has been subject to partner involvement throughout.

Background papers

None

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2 February 2010



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Portfolio holder

2 February 2010