

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET MEETING

25th August 2005

Worcestershire's Local Area Agreement

OPEN	
COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME	
CORPORATE PLAN THEME:	Providing Community Leadership
KEY PRIORITY:	Effective Partnership Working
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr. Stephen Clee
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Chief Executive
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APPENDICES	None

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To brief Cabinet on plans for developing Worcestershire's Local Area Agreement (LAA).

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to RECOMMEND to Council that:

- 2.1 The Council, in its role as community leader and a key partner in both the Worcestershire Partnership and Wyre Forest Matters Partnership, welcomes and supports the development of a Local Area Agreement for Worcestershire.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 LAAs are a key part of the Government's ten-year strategy for public service reform. Worcestershire is one of the 66 areas recently announced in the second phase of LAAs, which the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) is rolling out across the country.
- 3.2 A LAA is a three-year agreement between central Government and a local area. Central Government will be represented by Government Office and the locality represented by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), local authority and other key partners in that area.

- 3.3 A LAA is based on a set of priority outcomes for an area aimed at improving quality of life for local people. These reflect both local and national priorities, including those from community strategies and other key strategies. The local area decides how to achieve the outcomes, for example by more flexible use of existing funding streams and pooling resources.
- 3.4 Most LAAs are structured around the following four funding blocks:
- a) Children and young people
 - b) Safer and stronger communities
 - c) Healthier communities and older people
 - d) Economic Development and enterprise
- 3.5 These draw together existing non-mainstream funding streams from ODPM, the Home Office and others. Unlike many LAAs that will focus on outcomes within each of the four funding streams, Worcestershire's LAA will take all these as a 'single pot', giving us greater flexibility.
- 3.6 LAAs are intended to be mechanisms for delivering better local public service outcomes through building a more flexible and responsive relationship between central Government and a locality.

4. BENEFITS OF THE LAA APPROACH

- 4.1 Worcestershire's LAA is a significant opportunity for us to build on existing partnership arrangements to meet local priorities more effectively. Benefits should include:
- a) A clearer focus on local priorities** – leading to improved local delivery and efficiency
 - b) Simplified funding streams** – reducing the associated bureaucracy and transitional costs
 - c) More flexible use of resources** – to meet areas of greatest need, opportunities to pool non-core funding and to achieve more for the same resource
 - d) Streamlined reporting and performance management**
 - e) More freedoms and flexibilities** – including less ring fenced funding, fewer Government 'initiatives', less red tape and greater innovation to tackle common issues
 - f) Strengthened partnership working** – less duplication, more joining up of services
 - g) Better dialogue between local and central Government**

5. WHO WILL PREPARE THE LAA AND WHEN?

- 5.1 Worcestershire's LAA will be a county wide agreement, owned and overseen by the Worcestershire Partnership. The County Council will lead negotiating the agreement with Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM). All key partners e.g. Worcestershire Partnership, Wyre Forest Matters LSP, the

District Council will have opportunities to engage in the development of the LAA and some will have a defined role in delivering the outcomes.

- 5.2 Worcestershire will sign its LAA by 31 March 2006. The agreement will last for three years and include a six-month 'refresh'. An initial draft should be available by late September/early October 2005.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Experience from the first 21 pilot LAAs has highlighted a number of key steps for developing a successful LAA and the additional challenges it presents for a two/three tier area – particularly the need for strong relationships and trust between partners, as not everyone can be at the 'top table'.
- 6.2 The good news is that the Worcestershire Partnership has strong foundations upon which to build an effective LAA. However robust governance arrangements and project management need to be put in place and will include establishing a high level LAA Steering Group, appointing a Project Manager and pulling together an operational group to do the work. Other key tasks are defining evidence-based outcomes, mapping funding streams, identifying potential freedoms and flexibilities and drafting the agreement.
- 6.3 The overall arrangements including the roles and responsibilities of partners for developing Worcestershire's LAA are still being finalised. In the meantime, partners are being asked to review the outcomes they are seeking to achieve and to consider how the LAA may support their achievement.
- 6.4 Over the coming months a number of events are also planned, which will help to shape Worcestershire's agreement. They are as follows:
- a) **6 September** – WMLGA Members Workshops at Worcestershire County Council, County Hall – open to all County and District Councillors
 - b) **9 September** - Worcestershire Partnership Board event – focusing on governance of partnership working at the county level, including the Local Area Agreement.
 - c) **8 September** - Safer and Stronger Communities Event (GOWM)
 - d) **15 September** - Children and Young People Event (GOWM)
 - e) **22 September** – Economic Development / Enterprise Event (GOWM)
 - f) **29 September** – Healthier Communities and Older People Event (GOWM)

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Until Worcestershire's LAA is drafted, it is too early to identify any specific financial implications.

8. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The development of the Worcestershire LAA will help to support the implementation of the Community Strategy and many other associated strategies for the District that impact upon the quality of life of local people.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 It is too early to identify any specific risk management implications.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 Worcestershire's LAA is a significant opportunity for us to continue to build on existing partnership arrangements to meet the needs and priorities of our local communities.

11. CONSULTEES

11.1 Corporate Management Team

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- ODPM Guidance – 'Local Area Agreements' – published 4th July 2005

Last updated 2nd August 2005