

## **Local Area Agreement update (LAA) update**

### **Summary**

This report seeks Board member approval to the key themes that been developed with the sector on the future of LAA policy, so that they can be developed as part of the 'Freedom to Lead – developing a new accountability framework' campaign.

This report also updates Board members on this year's LAA Review and Refresh, including scope and timescales.

### **Recommendations**

That the Board approve the key themes that have been developed with the sector so they can be developed as part of the 'Freedom to Lead – developing a new accountability framework' campaign.

Notes the implications of the LAA Review and Refresh.

### **Action**

Subject to Board member approval, LGA Group officers to develop policy options through the 'Freedom to Lead – developing a new accountability framework' campaign.

## Local Area Agreements Update

### 1. Local Area Agreements - Future Policy Development

1.1 Over the summer LGA Group sought views of the sector on the future of Local Area Agreement (LAA) policy. The sector has been engaged through the following activity:

- A national conference 'New routes to better outcomes' on 20 May 2009 brought together views of the sector, dealing with the complexities of making things happen through partnership working. Speakers included Councillor Sharon Taylor who gave an elected member perspective on partnership working and the current performance framework. The conference informed a publication to support partnerships look ahead and a practical guide on partnership delivery.
- LGA Group contributed to a Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) Task and Finish Group on the future of LAA policy and arranged for the group to be chaired by John Smith, Assistant Chief Executive Devon County Council.
- The LGA/IDeA LAA Advisory Network, a network of 35 local authority representatives, met on 9 September. They reviewed the experience of the current LAA framework and considered principles for a new sector led approach to performance management. The Network also considered how they might support the LGA Improvement Board develop a future model.

1.2 Five broad themes have come through from this activity, against each of which there could be a range of policy options developed.

1.3 This report seeks Board members' approval of the five themes in order that officers can further develop the themes as part of the 'Freedom to Lead – developing a new accountability framework' campaign.

- **A single framework**

The single most important thing to improve LAAs would be the alignment of the performance frameworks. To achieve true prioritisation, LAAs would operate as close as possible within an ideal environment of a single cross-sector framework. This streamlined framework would have fewer targets overall and greater coherence based on common principles.

- **A better balance**

A better balance of national and local priorities and a simpler way of arriving at that balance. Evidence from negotiations shows that local and national priorities are very often the same, with disagreement mostly only on a minority of priorities and at the margin of target levels. LAAs could aim to achieve better outcomes by being more local overall.

- **Ambition & Efficiencies**

A future framework would need to put a stronger accent on value for money through promoting innovation, transformation and efficiencies.

- **Strengthened Local Leadership**

A future framework will need to promote local leadership, empowering local partners to collaborate on longer-term outcomes and be more accountable to local people.

- **Citizens and Communities**

A future framework will need to find the best possible fit between LAA priorities on the one hand and ensuring fairness and consistent minimum standards on the other. The emphasis would be accountability to citizens.

## **2. Local Area Agreements - Review and Refresh 2009/10**

2. On behalf of the Improvement Board, LGA Group has influenced the review and refresh of the current 2008-2011 LAAs by involvement in the CLG LAA Project Board and also arranged sector input through Adrian Smith, Cambridgeshire County Council.
- 2.2 The review and refresh timeline and negotiation parameters have now been agreed across government departments and with the Government Offices.
- 2.3 Unlike the first LAA review (2008/09), this review will follow CAA, which will align the various milestones of the performance cycle for the first time. Reviews will be based on CAA and avoid any separate assessments. The focus of the reviews will be deciding what more needs to be done to achieve agreed priorities, rather than negotiating targets.
- 2.4 The review will provide an opportunity to refresh targets against the limited suite of indicators exempted from reward lockdown last spring. In a few areas, by exception, there may also be one or two other targets to be finalised, for example in the nine areas currently without a year-three target on teenage pregnancy.

- 2.5 On review, LGA Group has lobbied for government requests for information to be limited, and less overall than last year. Any national reports will be few in number, limited in scope and draw on existing data.
- 2.6 On refresh, LGA Group has lobbied for Government to avoid reopening LAAs, unless merited clearly by findings in CAA. LGA Group and sector representatives have lobbied to avoid reopening LAAs beyond a limited set of indicators. Indicators that will potentially be revisited include those relating to the Place Survey, indicators where source data has or is to be changed and indicators that were deferred in April 2009 due to late data.

### **Timeline**

- 2.7 The key milestones are set out below:
- 13 November 2009: LSPs forward their latest 'Self-Assessment Performance Report' to Government Offices (NB: this is optional for local areas)
  - December – January 2010: Annual Review discussions between Government Offices and local authorities and their partners
  - 25 January 2010: Government Offices annual review report to CLG.
  - 12 March 2010: Local Authority adoption of LAAs (NB: this is the deadline, but it might be in advance, depending upon schedule of Council or Cabinet Meetings).
  - 15 March 2010: Refresh process concluded and submission of final LAAs to CLG.
  - By Weds 31 March 2010: Ministerial Approval.

### **Local Arrangements**

- 2.8 Any revisions to an LAA need to be approved in line with the arrangements that have been put in place locally by the responsible local authority.

### **Alignment with other performance frameworks**

- 2.9 LGA Group have lobbied to ensure that LAA reviews are properly informed by and linked to related processes from other performance frameworks during the autumn in order to minimise the burden on local areas.
- 2.10 Government Offices will liaise with the Audit Commission CAA Leads at an early stage so that Direction of Travel assessments inform the review and avoid duplication. Assessments emerging from other performance assessments (e.g.

Vital Signs and the Analysis of Policing and Community Safety (APACS) strategic assessments) will also be considered as part of the review.

### **Financial Implications**

3. There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

### **Implications for Wales**

4. The LAAs do not apply in Wales.

Contact Officer: Rachel Litherland

Phone No: 07795 076834

Email: [rachel.litherland@idea.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.litherland@idea.gov.uk)