

Council Meeting

27 May 2008

Booklet 1

Recommendations

CABINET

20th May, 2008

Cabinet Members

- Councillor Blundell
- Councillor Mrs. Dixon
- Councillor Foster
- Councillor Mrs Johnson
- Councillor Lee
- Councillor Noonan
- Councillor Ridley
- Councillor Sawdon
- Councillor Taylor (Chair)
- Councillor Williams

Non-Voting Opposition
Representatives present:-

- Councillor Duggins
- Councillor Field
- Councillor Mutton
- Councillor Nellist

Deputy Chair of Scrutiny
Co-ordination Committee
present:-

- Councillor Crookes (for the consideration of the matters dealt with in Minutes 2 and 3 below)

Employees Present:-

- P. Bowman (City Services Directorate)
- S. Brake (Head of Policy and Business, Community Services)
- R. Brankowski (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
- L. Bull (Acting Director of Community Services)
- M. Checkley (City Services Directorate)
- F. Collingham (Communications and Media Relations Manager)
- M. Dickens (City Services Directorate)
- C. Forde (Head of Legal Services)
- B. Hastie (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)
- G. Hyde (City Development Directorate)
- J. Jardine (Chief Executive's Directorate)
- P. Jennings (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)
- A. Lamb (Head of Children's Specialist Services, Social Care)
- S. Manzie (Chief Executive)
- J. McGuigan (Director of City Development)
- B. Messinger (Director of Customer and Workforce Services)
- S. Pickering (Director of City Services)
- J. Venn (Chief Executive's Directorate)

Apologies:-

- C. Green (Director of Children, Learning and Young People)
- J. Parry (Assistant Chief Executive)
- C. West (Director of Finance and Legal Services)

RECOMMENDATION

3. **Coventry Local Area Agreement 2008/2009 – 2010/2011**

With reference to Minute 215/07 approving the proposed indicator set for the Local Area Agreement (LAA) as the basis for further negotiation with the Government, the Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive recommending the agreement of the draft Coventry Local Area Agreement indicators and targets for submission to central government.

The report pointed out that, at the time of its despatch on the 12th May, 2008, negotiations were still in progress and, accordingly, the final version of Appendix A to the report (the Coventry Local Area Agreement Priorities Indicators and Targets), being the final negotiated position with Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM), was circulated to the Cabinet and all Council members on the 16th May, 2008.

In terms of background, the report indicated that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 requires every local authority area to develop a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) setting out the vision and priorities for the local area and requires a new Local Area Agreement (LAA) to be developed in all strategic local authority areas.

"Coventry – the next twenty years", Coventry's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), builds upon the previous Coventry Community Plan, sets out the city's long-term outcomes and short-term priorities and was agreed and formally adopted in March 2008 (Minute 215/07 refers). Coventry's first three-year local area agreement, one of the very first to be negotiated, came to an end in March 2008.

A Local Area Agreement is an agreement between central government and the local authority and its partners about the priorities for the local area, as expressed in the LAA targets. A range of public agencies have a "duty to co-operate" with each other when developing the LAA targets and a "duty to have regard" to help deliver these targets. The Local Area Agreement will be key to the future performance management of the Council and the Coventry Partnership.

The legislation and guidance sets out the requirement for all new Local Area Agreements to include up to 35 local priorities to be measured by choosing from the 198 indicators in the new National Indicator Set (NIS) for local authorities and local authority partnerships. Final technical guidance on the National Indicator Set was published on the 1st April, 2008, and a number of the new indicators will not now be introduced until 2009/10.

The selection of indicators and the targets for each indicator must be undertaken through negotiations between central government, represented by the Government Office, and the local authority and partners, balancing the delivery of the local sustainable community strategy on the one hand with the delivery of national priorities, as expressed by the new National Indicator Set on the other.

A further sixteen mandatory indicators from the National Indicator Set relating primarily to educational achievement are also to be included in each LAA and the targets for these are negotiated separately through the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

The indicators in the Local Area Agreement are the only indicators from the new National Indicator Set that require the Council and its partners to agree specific targets with central government. However the new Comprehensive Area Assessment of the Council and local partners will include the consideration of local performance on all of the 198 indicators in the Set.

All draft local area agreements are required to be submitted to central government by the beginning of June and are expected to be signed off by Ministers by the end of that month.

As regards the development of the Coventry Local Area Agreement, the report indicated that the above-mentioned SCS was developed by the Coventry Partnership and the Council and benefited from a comprehensive and thorough consultation process led by the Coventry Partnership. It was extensively amended as a result of the comments received – many from the voluntary and community sectors – and the short-term priorities, in particular, were changed to reflect the consultation process.

As indicated above, Coventry's new LAA is based upon the short-term priorities that are set out in the SCS. Indicators were selected from the NIS that reflected and best measured Coventry's local priorities, and their inclusion was negotiated by the Coventry Partnership with GOWM. GOWM has been tasked with ensuring that Coventry's LAA includes indicators that also reflect national priorities and areas that the Government wish to see improved.

At its meeting on the 11th March, 2008 (Minute 215/07 refers), the Cabinet had endorsed an initial set of indicators for the LAA as the basis for target-setting negotiations with central government. Since then, further detailed information and analysis has been produced for each indicator to inform the target-setting process, including baseline and comparative data, expected performance projections and an assessment of current activity.

Care has been taken to ensure that the indicators selected are robust and measurable and make sense together as a local set. Equality and cohesion issues will be addressed through all the indicators where it is appropriate and priorities that require partnership working have received particular attention. The Government has decided that a number of NIS indicators will not be measured until 2009/10 – this affects seven of the thirty-five indicators that have been selected for the Coventry LAA. As with the previous LAA, perception measures have been largely avoided as they do not lend themselves to robust management of performance over three years or target-setting. The two exceptions to this are indicators on anti-social behaviour and decision-making.

Detailed negotiations have been taking place between the Council, local partners and GOWM to agree indicators and targets for the draft LAA based on local evidence and national performance priorities. The table at appendix A to the report submitted sets out the indicators and targets that have been negotiated through this process and these are subject to formal approval by the Council and then by central government Ministers.

The indicators and targets are set out under the most relevant theme and appropriate priority of the Coventry SCS. However, it should be noted that the development of the SCS has highlighted the cross-cutting nature of many of the priorities in the strategy and the activities that are undertaken to address them and this is also true of the LAA priorities and indicators. The effective treatment of drug-users, for example, is both a health and community safety priority, graduate retention will be dependent upon a range of activity under several of the priorities and a reduction of the number of children travelling to school by car will have a positive impact on congestion, carbon emissions, obesity and, according to research, attainment at school.

The Coventry Partnership Board endorsed the proposed indicators and targets for the draft LAA at their meeting on the 8th May, 2008.

Following formal approval by full council, the draft LAA is statutorily required to be submitted to central government by the 30th May, 2008 and is expected to be signed off by Ministers by the end of June 2008. Once agreed, the LAA will run for three years - from April 2008 to March 2011, with an annual refresh for 2009/10 and 2010/11.

A robust action plan will be developed for each of the LAA indicators involving all relevant partners who will work together to deliver these plans over the next three years, including those agencies who have a "duty to co-operate". These will be included with the relevant Coventry Partnership theme-group's plans and partner organisations' delivery plans – including the Council's Corporate Plan. Progress on the LAA as a whole will be performance managed within the Council by the Cabinet and Scrutiny, with partners through the Local Public Service Board and the Coventry Partnership Board.

The report summarised the various implications of the LAA. As regards finance, it indicated that the Government has allocated funding for a national reward grant fund for the delivery of new LAAs although this is relatively small and it is not yet clear how this will be allocated. A new Area Based Grant, directly allocated to local authorities annually from April 2008, is made up from a number of specific ring-fenced grants previously received by the Council and other partners, with the expectation that this will be used locally to improve performance and achieve priority outcomes. The LAA will directly influence how this funding is allocated.

The Cabinet noted that the LAA is a key decision and that, due to the need to publish the Forward Plan of Key Decisions prior to the calendar of meetings being approved, it was not possible to publish this item as required by legislation.

As a result, in accordance with paragraph 4.2.16 of the Council's Constitution, Councillor Crookes, Deputy Chair of the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, attended the meeting of the Cabinet and agreed that this matter may be considered as an urgent item, as to delay its consideration in order for the key decision to be published would mean that the Local Area Agreement could not be approved before the deadline of the 30th May, 2008.

The Cabinet decided to agree the draft Coventry Local Area Agreement indicators and targets (set out in appendix A to the report submitted) and to recommend this to full council for formal adoption.

In addition, at Councillor Nellist's suggestion, the Cabinet asked for a briefing note to be provided prior to the Council's extraordinary meeting on the 27th May, 2008, with further information about the housing target in the indicators against the background of the level of social housing currently available in the city.

RESOLVED that the City Council be recommended to formally adopt the draft Coventry Local Area Agreement indicators and targets (set out in Appendix A to the report submitted to the meeting of the Council) for submission to central government.