

## **Position Statement in relation to Rossendale Council's & Rossendale's LSP Engagement with the LSP**

During 2006 Rossendale Borough Council signed up to the Lancashire Local Area Agreement (LAA), which is now approaching the end of its first delivery year of a three year delivery programme.

### **1. Grant Determination & Legal Status of LCC as the 'Accountable Body' for the LAA**

Lancashire County Council are at present refusing to accept liability as the accountable body, as they believe that this exposes them to an unacceptably high level of potential financial risk, as shown in this statement taken from their letter to the DCLG: - ***"Whilst the County Council has asked in good faith and effectively accepted this risk in the first year, that has been against a level of pooled funding within the LAA of £7m. However, this is set to increase four fold in 2007/08. This exposes the County Council as Accountable Body to an unacceptable level of financial risk, given the broad parameters within which the repayment, withholding, withdrawal or suspension of grant may occur"***.

### **2. Future Pooled Funding**

The issue of pooled funding is an area of concern for several LAA partners, including RBC. Funding that is received directly by partners at present, may in future go to LCC, and at present there is a lack of clarity regarding how, and indeed if, this will be 'pass-ported' back to partners.

### **3. RBC Contributions to the Original LAA Outcomes & Targets**

At present all Lancashire Districts are signed up to return information on thirteen targets (appendix1) at the end of year one ( March 2007), although there are concerns that lack of baseline information regarding Housing Stock Conditions, will prevent this for the targets that rely on this information. However, this issue has been identified by a number of Districts and is being addressed. Other 'outcomes' have been identified in relevant Business Plans, although without a specific target being attached to them.

### **4. The LAA 'Refresh' Document for 2007-8**

An LAA Refresh document (appendix 2) has also been developed which contains a number of new proposals for mandatory outcomes and targets, together with a proposed series of amendments to existing outcomes & targets in the original agreement. These new proposals were approved by GOVNW in early January and the 'refresh' has since been submitted to central government for approval. If the submission is accepted, the new outcomes and targets will become part of the agreement from April 2008.

The timing of the acceptance ( or not) of the new agreement presents a problem in terms of identifying whether RBC would want to place some of these new targets within relevant Business Plans.

## **5. RBC engagement with the LAA**

The Head of Policy & Change Management has represented RBC at a number of meetings and events during the development of the LAA and currently represents the Council at meetings of the LAA Performance Group.

In the early development months of the LAA it was initially envisaged that a 'cluster approach' towards District Council engagement with the LAA would be adopted, with RBC being part of the East Lancs Cluster. As a result of this approach the Head of PCM attended a series of meetings with her counterparts from the East Lancashire Councils, and agreement was reached that each one of the East Lancs Councils would take the lead on an LAA theme and represent the interests of all East Lancashire Councils, with RBC taking the lead on Healthy Communities & Older People.

However, when the final structure of the LAA decision making and engagement groups was established, it was recognised that this cluster approach would not be viable and it was therefore abandoned, although the East Lancashire group do still meet to share progress and concerns.

## **6. RBC Involvement with the LAA Blocks**

The Council have assigned responsibility to the following officers to represent the Council on each of the themes contained within the LAA.

Phillip Mepham - Healthy Communities & Older People  
Gary Parsons – Healthy Communities & Older People (Housing Element)  
Liz Murphy - Children & Young People  
Trish Ellins - Safer & Stronger Communities  
Sarah Dunn - Economic Development

To date this responsibility has involved:

- **Attending the relevant LAA theme group meetings and events on a regular basis & representing RBC's interests at such meetings**
- **Providing the relevant baseline information from Rossendale as requested by the LAA.**
- **Where targets have been agreed providing accurate outturn information from Rossendale in respect of the target to the agreed schedule of reporting**
- **Identifying instances where Rossendale can contribute to achieving the outcomes and targets as identified within the LAA**
- **Liaising with the relevant HoS to identify RBC contributions to the LAA within their Business Plan**

- **Maintaining on-going evidence to ensure that RBC contributions are recognised by the LAA & where appropriate, can benefit from any reward grant.**

Generally, the RBC appointed leads have been fulfilling these requirements, but, as there is no officer within RBC with a particular remit for 'Children & Younger People', Liz Murphy, Head of HR, agreed to represent the Council in relation to this, but has had some difficulties in attending events due to other commitments.

## **7. Communication between RBC & Rossendale's LSP**

As a result, the LSP's ongoing involvement in the process has been inconsistent, with some of the LSP theme groups being more involved than others. In some cases, various members of the LSP theme groups are also members of particular LAA blocks, and likewise, in some instances, the RBC LAA Lead Officer is also an existing member of the relevant LSP theme group and this is facilitating communication.

As a result, there are several instances of sharing feedback and progress at the LSP theme group meetings, but, no formal mechanism has been agreed, and in particular there are no agreed reporting arrangements between the LSP theme Groups and the LSP Executive.

## **8. Communicating RBC progress against the LAA to SMT & Members**

As the LAA entered into its first delivery year in April 2006, each of RBC's HoS made an attempt to identify measures and targets contained within the LAA and place them within their respective Business Plans. As the year has progressed, RBC Leads have been engaging with their HoS, and the Head of PCM has been engaging with some members of the SMT on an ad-hoc basis on various issues. However, no formal reporting arrangements have been established to either SMT as a whole, or Members.

## **9. RBC's current position against each of the themes**

The following sets out what are currently seen as the key issues in relation to each block theme within the LAA.

### **9.1 LAA Theme - Safer & Stronger Communities**

Rossendale Council's Community Safety Officer, Trish Ellins is also a member of the LSP Community Safety Theme Group and as a result has been able to regularly provide feedback to this group although it is not currently tabled as standard agenda item.

### 9.1.1 Key Issues

- Concerns over potential for pooled funding to be given to LCC from April 2007 making it difficult to plan ahead. A Commissioning Group has been established & will be making recommendations in the near future.
- RBC delivery & contribution is generally taking to this theme through Criminal Damage projects & towards environment measures
- Concerns that only 9 of the 12 Districts (Rossendale is exceeding the target) currently are on target to meet the BSC reduction required, particularly around criminal damage by the end of March 2008. Criminal Damage is one of the stretch targets and not hitting the target will mean a greatly reduced reward grant
- Specific work currently taking place on Alcohol Harm Reduction with East Lancs partners, which will contribute towards targets within the LAA
- Contributing towards 'Home Fire Safety' by passing on contact information to the Fire Service for Rossendale residents whose homes have been burgled, who will then be offered a fire safety prevention check from the Fire Service.

### 9.2 LAA Theme - Economic Development

In relation to the LAA no mechanism has been established as of yet between RBC and the LSP's Regeneration Board theme group, although as Ian Kent of Job Centre Plus, Andrew Barrow of LCDL, and Rob Carder of Business Link, are all active members of both the LAA Economic Development theme group, and the LSP theme group, it is felt that this LSP group is well informed. Jon Sharples, Head of ERSB, attends the Regeneration Board on behalf of RBC & it is suggested that he provides the link in conjunction with Sarah Dunn.

#### 9.2.1 Key Issues

- RBC potential for involvement in delivering measures is minimal with the emphasis (and resource) directed towards the lead organisation for the targets in this block
- There is a move to make a stronger link between the LAA and the Regeneration Board of the LSP with the idea that we focus on those measures most relevant to Rossendale
- Rossendale is currently exceeding the Business Start-Up target & as RBC financially support the core costs of PEER and as such are contributing to achievements against this measure.
- Job Centre Plus have also been invited to be represented at the Regeneration Board which should help further the link between the LAA and the Regeneration Board

- Meeting needs to be arranged with the other block leads for Transport (LCC) and Skills (LSC)

### **9.3 LAA Theme - Healthy Communities & Older People**

No feedback has been taking place between the RBC lead, Phillip Mepham and the LSP. There is also a cross-over of interest between the LSP groups of the Environment & Health & Well-Being. It is therefore suggested that Phillip Mepham up-dates the Health & Well-Being group and briefs RBC's Environmental Health Officer, Lorna Rourke, who already attends the Environment Group to enable her to provide the link to this group.

#### **9.3.1 Key Issues**

- Concern that many of the targets and measures have yet to be agreed
- The 'Smoke Free Rossendale' project will contribute to a number of measures
- Work commenced on Energy Efficiency in conjunction with Lancashire Energy Efficiency Advice Centre has the potential to contribute after the 'refresh'
- The new 'Spearhead Authorities' project & health inequality work could provide the levers for further contribution
- Phillip Mepham has identified a number of areas where he believes colleagues in Environmental Health could contribute & has distributed these for consideration of inclusion within business or team plans

### **9.4 LAA Theme - Healthy Communities & Older People (Housing Element)**

Whilst Gary does not currently attend the LAA Housing Theme Group, he has indicated that he is willing to do so. Gary Parsons, Strategic Housing Manager, is currently taking a lead role in co-ordinating the collection & collation of baseline measures from Councils for the LAA and has commenced an action plan that looks at how RBC can contribute.

#### **9.4.1 Key Issues**

- Data collection and measurement is a major barrier as it requires a housing stock condition surveys to be undertaken.
- Monitoring the progress of Green Vale Homes against a number of targets
- The potential for an LAA funded, dedicated East Lancashire officer for LAA housing projects is being investigated

- Potential for funding ‘bombshell’ in relation to the central pooling of NW Regional Assembly funds that are currently used for ‘Supporting People’ & other projects

## **9.5 Children & Young People**

Ian Mullholland is the Chair of the Education and Lifelong Learning Theme Group. Liz Murphy, Head of Human Resources represents the Council on the Children and Young People’s Steering Group of the LAA, and the LSP theme Group. In addition a group of Lead Officers addressing the Every Child Matters Agenda has also been established to which Liz Murphy and Councillor Brian Essex have also been invited.

### **The LAA refresh in relation to Children and Young People**

The refresh has resulted in a range of outcomes associated with:

- Improved positive social participation by Children and Young People
- Reduced fear of crime and anti-social behaviour amongst Lancashire’s young people
- Helping children and young people become healthy
- Increased educational attainment
- Improved outcomes for Lancashire’s “Looked After Children”

The main indicators the Council and its partners can influence are:

- Number of Children who are engaged in positive and diversionary activities
- Percentage of young people aged 13 – 19 who undergo personal and social development (This refers to citizenship and volunteering within the community)
- % of 16-18 year old not in education employment or training

However, the Council does influence a number of the outcomes within the LAA ranging from housing to leisure.

### **Children and Young People’s Steering Group of the LAA**

The Local Area Agreement Children and Young People’s Steering Group comprises up to 40 individuals from across Lancashire, including representatives from all the District Councils. The Steering Group has committed to delivery of the LAA on a locality footprint and to engaging the local LSPs to achieve this. Representatives from the Steering Group will be attending a meeting of the Young Persons Issues Network in March.

### **The Young Persons Issues Network**

The Young Persons Issues Network comprises a range of delivers of services for Young People across Rossendale. Liz Murphy, Head of Human Resources has attended and Councillor Brian Essex has attended meetings in the past. The meeting has previously been chaired by LCC, Youth and Community Services, and the meeting is in the main a networking opportunity of those agencies delivering services to Children and Young People. Ilona Snow-Miller Head of Community and Partnerships will attend the 7<sup>th</sup> March meeting.

### **Every Child Matters Agenda**

In response to the implementation of the Children's Act and the lack of progress within some Districts in relation to the Every Child Matters Agenda. A group of lead officers from across the Districts has been established. This follows on from an audit of progress across Lancashire carried out by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Audit Commission.

The focus of this meeting is the priority outcomes in relation to:

Be Healthy

Stay Safe

Enjoy and Achieve

Make a positive Contribution

Achieve Economic Well-Being

The Council has produced a strategy in relation to how it is delivering on all the above areas

- 9.5.1** Concern in relation to how the different agencies cooperate and work in partnership to deliver the outcomes identified within the LAA. In addition all the appropriate partners need to be fully engaged.

## **10. Recommendations**

1. That were the RBC Lead is already attending the relevant LSP theme group, or has indicated that they are prepared to attend the group this role is formally agreed
2. That Liz Murphy consults with Councillor Brian Essex to enable him to report on her behalf to the Education & Lifelong Learning theme group.
3. That Sarah Dunn liaises with Jon Sharples to represent RBC on the Regeneration Board
4. Following agreement of the above roles that the LAA is put forward as a formal agenda item, on at least a quarterly basis.
5. That the RBC Lead provides a quarterly position/up-date statement as an agenda item at each of the LSP's Executive Performance Meetings (quarterly) & also provides this statement to the relevant RBC Portfolio Holder
6. That Heads of Service review the attached LAA refresh document in conjunction with the relevant RBC Block Lead & consider the identification of potential contributions for inclusion within their business plans