

East Sussex Integrated Sustainable Community Strategy (ESISCS) and Local Area Agreement (LAA) Briefing

February 2008

Introduction

The purpose of this briefing is to help provide all partners with an update on recent and planned developments relating to the integrated sustainable community strategy in East Sussex and the Local Area Agreement; and to outline what needs to happen between now and June 2008 when we are required to submit a new LAA to Government.

Sustainable Community Strategy

The Local Government Act 2007 requires every local authority to develop a 'sustainable' community strategy. In East Sussex it was agreed between the six local strategic partnerships (LSPs) that we would aim for an integrated model (ESISCS). This would outline a description of East Sussex, the place, as it is now and a vision of how we would want to see it in 20 years time. The key priorities that we could evidence as important to the people of East Sussex and needing to be improved or maintained would be tackled through a shared action plan. This action plan would consist of a Local Area Agreement (see next section) and a set of locally agreed actions.

The [ESISCS](#)¹ was drafted in the autumn of 2007 and has been through a 12 week consultation exercise (to 11.02.2008) after which a final draft will be produced for endorsement by all six LSPs and each of the six local authorities, before being finally published in June 2008. The draft themes are:

- The economy, jobs and prosperity
- Transport, access and communications
- Housing
- Environment and climate change
- Education, learning and skills
- Health and wellbeing
- Community safety
- Community strength and leadership
- Culture, sports and leisure

Children and young people and older people will receive a special focus across these themes.

Local Area Agreement

In 2006 East Sussex the East Sussex Strategic Partnership (ESSP) with East Sussex County Council as the 'accountable body' entered into a three year LAA entitled '[All Together Better](#)'² with Government, signed by the then Minister for Local Government, David Miliband. The LAA contained 23 overall outcomes to be achieved in partnership, with some 66 supporting targets and

¹ <http://www.essp.org.uk/essp/esiscs.htm>

² <http://www.essp.org.uk/essp/pdf/LAA.pdf>

237 indicators. Some of the targets were mandatory i.e. required by Government to be included and others were 'stretch' targets, where for an agreed additional performance over what could normally be expected a financial reward could be paid by Government for their achievement.

In the Local Government Act 2007 it was announced that all local authorities would be required to develop a new LAA with Government by June 2007; in order to link to the new 3 year Local Government Finance Settlement and the introduction of a new performance framework for local authorities from April 2008; with a reduction to 198 key indicators by which Government would monitor Local Government and the replacement of the inspection regime known as Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) with the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) in 2009. Priorities in the new LAA were expected to be identified from those in the sustainable community strategy.

In East Sussex as we were in the second year of our existing LAA and developing a new sustainable community strategy, for which the priorities had not yet been finalised. The ESSP felt very strongly that we should be allowed to complete our existing LAA (March 2009) and allow new priorities for a subsequent LAA to flow from the new ESISCS to be ready by June 2008. This would also allow for the adequate and meaningful involvement of a range of partners. At the end of November a [letter](#)³ was written to the Minister of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government outlining our case and seeking a relaxation of the timetable. In mid January a negative response to our request was received from the Local Government Minister. This response has left partners in East Sussex having to develop, very quickly, a new LAA for submission by the start of June 2008.

The New LAA

"LAAs will be the only place where central government will agree targets with local authorities and their partners on outcomes delivered by local government on its own or in partnership with others" (Local Government White Paper 2007)

- LAAs will consist of 'up to 35' indicators drawn from the new [National Indicator Set](#)⁴ (NIS), plus 16 mandatory targets from the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).
- There is a statutory duty on named partners⁵ to co-operate in the development and delivery of the new LAA.
- LAAs must give a strong story of the sense of 'place' and the nature of ambition for that 'place' i.e. East Sussex.
- Existing LAA 'stretch' targets will need to continue to be monitored through to their original end date (March 2009 in East Sussex)

³ <http://www.essp.org.uk/essp/pdf/Letter%20to%20Rt%20Hon%20Hazel%20Blears%20Nov%202007.doc>

⁴ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nationalindicator>

⁵ Upper Tier Authorities, District Authorities, Chief Officer of Police, Police Authorities, Local Probation Boards, Youth Offending Teams, Primary Care Trusts, NHS Foundation Trusts, NHS Health Trusts, The Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus, Health and Safety Executive, Fire and Rescue Authorities, The Highways Agency, The Environment Agency, Natural England, Regional Development Agencies, National Park Authorities, Joint Waste Disposal Authorities.

- There will be a 'performance reward' pertaining to the achievement of the overall LAA (all targets) but the detail of amounts and exactly how it will operate has not yet been announced by Government.
- There will be an annual 'refresh' of the LAA to allow for changing priorities (new issues, poor performance etc.)

As part of the arrangements under the Local Government Act, the Government announced the introduction of Area Based Grants (ABG), this is a new way of paying money to local government that previously came through specific grants (many of them latterly routed through the LAA). ABG is a non ring fenced general grant which means that the Government does not specify how it is to be spent and does not require any additional monitoring arrangements (it is treated in the same way as Rate Support Grant (RSG)). This provides maximum flexibility for local authorities to target resources on what matters most including LAA priorities. However to re-iterate, it is not new money and as with all funding streams is currently fully committed to delivering priorities. Its flexibility does allow, over time, consideration of more creative and cross cutting ways of delivering on priorities, together with other non ring fenced monies available to other agencies.

Process to new LAA

The lead organisation in the development of the new LAA is East Sussex County Council; the ESSP will provide a short life working group to act as the Project Board for the LAA development. A Project Team representing the themes in the draft ESISCS and the geographical areas (districts and boroughs) will be established; the membership of this may need to change as potential priorities are honed into specific indicators. Project Team members will be expected to liaise through relevant thematic partnership meetings and directly with partners in order to consider priorities for inclusion but these will primarily be drawn from the identified priorities within ESISCS.

Given the foreshortened timetable (other local authorities had to submit their priorities by 15 January 2008) GOSE will wish to agree a revised timetable. This is likely to require priorities to be identified in March in order to allow time for detailed negotiation on the indicators before final submission in early June.

The ESSP will need to agree the LAA for submission, as will the County Council (because of its accountable body role). However it is hoped that other LSPs and partners will have the opportunity to endorse the LAA (as the timetable allows).

Principles for Development

- Ensure the LAA remains focused on making a significant impact for the residents of East Sussex.
- Recognise that 2008/09 will be an interim year because the ESISCS has not yet been finalised.
- The draft ESISCS and the existing LAA will be the starting point for choosing which indicators from the National Indicator Set (NIS) to prioritise.

- Commitment to action must be embedded in each partners' business plan (or equivalent)
- Work to ensure democratic accountability and operate in a way that is clear, open and transparent with clear lines of communication.
- Chosen indicators must require partnership (i.e. more than one organisation) for delivery.
- Involve partners in a way that is appropriate and proportionate to the contribution they are making to the delivery of the outcomes and within the constraints of the timetable.
- ESISCS priorities that do not end up in the LAA will be captured in the ESISCS Action Plan and/or local LSP action plans and will be monitored locally.

Possible criteria for inclusion as an LAA 'up to 35' indicator

- Has a cross cutting impact on ESISCS draft priorities
- Helps to deliver a key task within the draft ESISCS
- Helps deliver a priority of one or more local district and borough chapters of the ESISCS
- In current LAA
- Requires a partnership approach for delivery
- Addresses inequality or deprivation, poor performance, service improvement and sustainable development
- Has a robust measure in the National Indicator Set (NIS) which can measure the required outcome
- Is supported by robust data (or baselines can be easily developed) and capable of being performance managed
- A measurable improvement possible over 3 years
- GOSE sees as a priority
- Would not have a perverse incentive on another indicator

In addition the LAA will include the 16 statutory DCSF indicators.

Government Office Perspective

Each Government Office has developed for its areas a 'story of place' and suggested indicators that they consider could be appropriate. The ['story of place'](#)⁶ was shared with the ESSP at the end of 2007. Whilst the onus on identifying priorities rests locally there is an expectation that we consider GOSE's views. The Project Board and Team may have to justify the non inclusion of indicators identified by GOSE, but not locally considered as priorities, or not appropriate for inclusion.

Further Information

If you require any further information on the ESISCS or new LAA please contact Alison Horan at alison.horan@eastsussex.gov.uk or Lisa Schrevel at lisa.schrevel@eastsussex.gov.uk or phone 01273 48

⁶ <http://www.essp.org.uk/essp/pdf/ESx%20Story%20of%20place.doc>