

Devon Strategic Housing Group

New Devon Local Area Agreement Housing Bulletin

November 2007

Welcome to the first edition of this bulletin.

The purpose of the bulletin is to keep you informed on progress with Housing within the 4th theme of the New Devon LAA. In this edition we have identified some FAQs that we hope will be useful. This bulletin does not cover general information about LAAs and their role although some useful web links are listed.

Two key dates for the LAA work are:

- **8th November 2007** GOSW and CLG event at Weston Super Mare for Chief Executives, Leaders and LSP Chairs across the region.
- **16th November 2007** which is the formal start to discussions between the LAA team at DCC and GOSW about the priorities for the LAA and which Performance Indicators Devon wants included in the LAA. DSHG working towards a draft Housing Strategy that identifies housing priority actions for the 2008-11 LAA to help inform those discussions.

Mary Ridgway Affordable Housing Coordinator

Where does Housing Fit in the LAA 2008-11?

The Devon LAA has 4 themes and Housing is being negotiated within the context of the 4th theme (Economy, Environment, Transport, Waste, Housing, Culture and Sport) although we expect to have the opportunity to influence the other themes. The theme lead is Ian Hutchcroft of DCC and meetings chaired by Tim Jones.

The other 3 themes are:

- Children and Young People
 - Safer and Stronger Communities
 - Healthier Communities and Older People
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What is the National Indicator Set and how does it relate to the LAA?

On 11 October 2007 CLG have published 'The New Performance Framework for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Single Set of National Indicators (NI)'

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

The 198 indicators are linked either to one of the 30 national PSAs or "Departmental Strategic Objectives". Up to 35 of the National Indicators (in addition to 18 mandatory education NIs) can be selected across the whole LAA and there is some potential to set Local Indicators although further guidance is pending. The challenge is to select an appropriate NI for an area which the LAA partnership sees as a priority and where we have a realistic chance of delivering. The jargon used is that the NI selected should tell the Devon story i.e. pick up on those things that are a priority to Devon.

CLG will shortly be consulting on the technical definitions of the indicators and inviting views on the methodology, frequency of reporting and data source of each of the indicators.

Who makes the decision as to what goes in the LAA?

There are several factors influencing the negotiation of the content of the LAA:

- Government Priorities (see the National Indicators)
 - Devon Priorities, as expressed in the Devon Sustainable Communities Strategy.
 - Some LAA criteria (the content needs to demonstrate that it requires complex partnership working, is focused on prevention and on greatest area of need, is evidence based, is creative/innovative and is an area where we can deliver real outcomes)
 - Finance – what pooled funding is available to take the work forward.
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How is the LAA Funded?

There is no new money rather the LAA is about pooling existing money.

Nationally £5 billion of former specific and ring fenced grant will be combined into non-targeted, non-ring fenced revenue support and Area-based grant. The Minister has recently written to CEXs of LAs outlining what capital grants will no longer be ring fenced and available for pooling. A copy of this letter has been forwarded to all DSHG partners. In Devon this is estimated to be about £27million but a significant proportion is likely to already be committed and work is underway to establish the extent of committed funds.

There is a big question mark over the availability of LABGI money.

What is the role of DSHG?

DSHG have been nominated as the lead partnership for Housing. This means that Mary Ridgway and Pauline Warner have attended several meetings about the LAA 4th theme. Where available, minutes and papers from these meetings have been forwarded to all DSHG partners.

We have been asked to prepare a 'Housing Strategy' that identifies the housing priorities and possible National Indicators relating to housing. This document will act as a briefing paper for those Officers sitting down with GOSW who will not have a housing background.

What are the key features of the Draft Housing Strategy?

The initial draft is more of a briefing paper setting out high level and fairly generic strategic outcomes and priorities for housing to inform opening discussions with GOSW.

This is a useful opportunity to develop a consensus on the medium term priorities for housing to inform the Devon Sustainable Communities Strategy as well as shorter term priority actions that could be taken forward through the LAA. The strategy can also help inform DSHG annual workplans and identify where we need to strengthen linkages with other partnerships.

The draft strategy set put the vision and strategic outcomes for Housing. For each strategic outcome the strategy evidences the issues, outlines what work is already underway, what links exist to other processes, partnerships and LAA themes, what isn't working so well and what priority actions are needed. The terminology 'strategic outcomes' reflects the terminology used within the LAA more generally.

We urgently need your views on whether we have got the general direction of travel for the strategy right as well as your comments and suggestions on what, at this stage, are ideas for Priority Actions.

What are the Strategic Outcomes in the draft strategy?

Strategic Outcomes

1. Increase the overall delivery of Housing in Devon within the context of sustainable communities (particularly at strategic locations).
2. Increase the delivery of Affordable Housing in urban and rural areas (and for all client groups)
3. Prevention of Homelessness and Better Housing Outcomes for Vulnerable Groups.
4. Better use and management of Existing Stock.
5. Improving the Quality of all Housing.

Cross Cutting Strategic Outcomes

6. Improved training and capacity building to support the 5 strategic outcomes.
7. Effective communication and engagement with key stakeholders and partners

What are the 'tricky issues'?

These include:

a. Governance and accountability:

The role of elected members, LSPs etc in signing off the LAAs

How do we build a consensus among our housing partners as to the priorities for the LAA within the timescale available?

b. How do we build on the work already started in the first round of the LAA where we focused on those areas where understanding and evidence was weakest in order to develop the evidence base that could inform local policy and practice as well as the next round of the LAA?

c. How do we manage the potential misalignment of the timing of any decision on the continuation funding for the Rural Housing Enablers?

d. How will be influence the other themes? Can we use our links through other partnerships and fora such as Supporting People? This particularly affects work relating to Older People, Younger People, vulnerable client groups and homelessness.

- There is only one NI relating directly to homelessness NI156 relating to numbers in temporary accommodation.

e. Should the 2 new communities be included in the LAA? If so how and what added value will be achieved by doing so?

f. National government focus is on significantly increasing the supply of new affordable housing but if we include the NI for % of new affordable homes delivered, what monies could be pooled and what control do we really have over the outcomes in the next 3 years?

g. How do we identify the correct priorities for private sector renewal and make the relevant linkages in the short timescale?

What are the initial thoughts about the Housing Priorities?

In terms of new affordable housing initial discussions suggest that a focus on rural affordable housing may be beneficial given that this is often a 'harder nut to crack', Devon is predominantly a rural county, it is an area where we can build on a significant amount of good work across Devon e.g. RHE programme, work on identification of sustainable communities, lessons from IDeA work in Devon

How can You contribute to the strategy?

We need to your contributions if the Housing Strategy and actions within the LAA are to have wider ownership amongst DSHG and its partners.

The tight timescale for a early draft that can inform initial discussions between the LAA team at DCC and GOSW has meant that the process for developing the strategy has needed a mix of 'shuttle diplomacy, one to one meetings with key stakeholders, briefings via DSHG Steering Group and emails.

The initial draft is needed by 15 November 2007 and from then we hope to establish a clear process for wider engagement by partners.

Please comment on the direction of travel for the emerging draft strategy either by email or telephone Mary on 01803 861180

What is the Democratic process?

The accountable body is the Devon Strategic Partnership and the LAA Delivery Board see <http://www.devonsp.org.uk/about.html> for a diagram of the structure.

A small group of county councillors have also been charged with overseeing the democratic process and have asked for improvements in the links with the LSPs and in how information is considered by the County Committees.

Where Can I find out more about LAAs?

1. The Devon Strategic web site has useful documents and a timetable for the Devon LAA: www.devonsp.org.uk/sustainablecommunitystrategy/index.html and www.devonlaa.org.uk

2. The CLG website provides useful background information, publications and links e.g. the Single Set of (198) National Indicators can be downloaded from the CLG site: www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/performanceframeworkpartnerships/localareaagreements/

198 indicators is linked either to one of the 30 national PSAs or "Departmental Strategic Objectives".

CLG will shortly be consulting on the technical definitions of the indicators and inviting views on the methodology, frequency of reporting and data source of each of the indicators.

3. IDeA has a very useful power point presentation called 'Leading Localities' an excellent summary of the principles behind LAAs with emphasis on the role of the Councillor <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=5111795>.

4. The LGA/IDeA has a good publication called 'A Very English Revolution'

We will also try and upload relevant documents to www.dshg.org.uk

Recent emails to watch for:

1. 15th October 2007. A copy of the letter from the Minister to CEX re pooled funding was circulated to DSHG Partners.



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letter HB to CLeader: