

LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS: NEXT STEPS

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE

CABINET

19TH MAY, 2005

Wards Affected

No Wards are affected

Purpose

To consent to register interest in a Local Area Agreement by the closing date of the 20th May, 2005.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision.

Recommendation

THAT consent be given for interest to be registered with Government Office West Midlands in obtaining a Local Area Agreement.

Reasons

Local Area Agreements are a key element in the Government's long term strategy for local government. Herefordshire Council registered interest in being one of the twenty pilot authorities but was not successful. In the West Midlands Telford and Wrekin, Coventry and Wolverhampton are now concluding their LAAs.

Considerations

1. A 'prospectus' outlining initial thoughts on LAAs was published in August 2004. The Government wants to develop both LAAs and the overarching strategy on "The Future of Local Government" together with local authorities and their partners.
2. A Local Area Agreement would enable Herefordshire Council to develop further the Herefordshire Partnership; strengthen the Council's Community Leadership role; gain additional freedoms from Government bureaucracy and control of individual funding pots.
3. The Government's clear intention is that every authority will conclude an LAA over the next few years.
4. The first stage of the process is to register interest with Government Office West Midlands by the 20th May, 2005. Submission of an expression of interest will not impede progress on concluding the LPSA 2.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Steve Martin, Corporate Policy and Research Manager on 01432 261877

5. An initial meeting was held on 9th May with Government Office for West Midlands. It is clear that the majority of local authorities in the West Midlands will bid this time. By the middle of June GOWM will decide those submissions it intends to forward for national consideration. These will be notified during the summer. If successful the detailed proposals, including funding arrangements would be worked up during the Autumn for commencement in April 2006. This would also coincide with the re-launch of the Herefordshire Plan and provide further focus for the work of the Herefordshire Partnership. A letter of in principle support has already been secured from a number of partners.
6. The LAA would need to place emphasis on one of three priority blocks – Children and Young People, Safer and Stronger Communities or Healthier Communities and Older People. It would be possible to link these themes into an ambitious project picking up some of the major priorities for the Council – Rotherwas, and its access issues, continued regeneration of South Wye, learning and skills, City centre regeneration and Edgar Street Grid. Work will continue on an outline submission to be tabled at the Cabinet meeting.

Alternative Options

We do not register interest.

Risk Management

The Council would need to provide match funding for any European bids. There will undoubtedly be capacity issues the Council would need to address at peak times during the negotiations and implementation.

Consultees

GOWM, AWM, Partners in the Herefordshire Partnership

Background Papers

None identified.