

**REPORT TO SOUTH AYRSHIRE SUSTAINABILITY FORUM
OF 26th AUGUST 2009**

SUBJECT: Briefing Paper on the Single Outcome Agreement

1. Purpose.

To inform and advise the Forum on the background, purpose, development and implementation of the Single Outcome Agreement

2. Recommendations.

Members of the Sustainability Forum are invited to note the Briefing Paper

3. Background.

Members of the Forum have requested a briefing to increase their understanding of the the context and implementation of the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA).

SOAs are a key part of the relationship between Scottish Government and Local Government. The Government's overall aim is to focus on creating a more successful country, and it seeks to deliver this through five strategic objectives: Wealthier & Fairer; Smarter; Healthier; Safer & Stronger; and Greener. 15 key national outcomes reflecting elements of each of these objectives have been identified to deliver an overall framework to improve all aspects of life , and these are at the heart of a new partnership with local government and the wider public sector. The arrangement is enshrined in an agreement between the Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities called the Concordat, a package of measures which sets the parameters and underpins the funding to be provided to local Government over the life of the Parliament. The benefits to local government of this arrangement are increased freedom to allocate resources to local priorities, a reduction in centrally driven indicators and targets and scope to develop more flexibility in partnership working.

4. Considerations.

What exactly is a Single Outcome Agreement?

Every Scottish local authority is required to produce, in association with their Community Planning Partners, an agreement with the Government that aligns their own local strategic priorities with the Governments National outcomes.

There are five key attributes to an SOA:

- a) It must have a strategic focus, and not be a collection of unprioritised actions.
- b) It must have clearly defined outcomes focussed on quality of life and local conditions that support this
- c) It must be based on evidence and a profile of social, economic and environmental conditions and trends

- d) It must be capable of delivery with a clear link to supporting plans and activities which lie “ below the waterline”, i.e at secondary action plan level
- e) It must promote continuous improvement, and secure full cooperation of local partners and communities

How is the SOA developed?

A Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) is the means by which Community Planning Partnerships agree their strategic priorities for their local area, and express those priorities as outcomes to be delivered by the partners, either individually or jointly while showing how those outcomes should contribute to the Scottish Governments relevant national outcomes. It is based on the Community Plan and the plans of local partners. The development process for the SOA must involve as wide a range of local partners as possible, must consider all of the National Outcomes, and demonstrate how they will be addressed in the context of the local profile, and contain a coherent series of local outcomes that realistically balance ambition with a realistic timescale for improvement

What is the format of the SOA?

The Government has set out guidelines and templates to assist in the formulation of a coherent SOA, the elements of which are summarised as follows:

Purpose

It must define areas of improvement and better outcomes based on national priorities and local conditions and needs

Scope

It must involve all services provided by local authorities and those of the Community Plan Partners

Governance

It must set out the Governance and scrutiny arrangements for the delivery of the SOA

Development

It must make clear how the SOA will be delivered by partners, and be reviewed and engage communities of interest and geography

Local context

It must make clear the relevance of National Objectives to the local profile and past performance and where improvement is required

Outcomes

There must be a clear and manageable set of local outcomes with related strategic objectives, targets and indicators

Performance Management

It must summarise how delivery will be managed and how it links to other partners plans

Public Reporting

There must be a clear indication of public accountability and reporting

How are they delivered?

The intention is that the SOAs be run on a three year rolling basis, with annual review and updating. The SOA is delivered by a detailed action plan designed to support the high level outcomes and indicators. These actions may derive from existing plans and programmes in place by the partners, or may be developed specifically to direct resources to help address a strategic objective. While the Community Planning Partnership is accountable to the Scottish Government through the local authority for the performance of the SOA, Partners are accountable to the CP Board for delivery of supporting actions that they have signed up to.

Further information

Further information on the SOA process and details of individual SOAs across Scotland can be found at the following websites by following the relevant links

Scottish Government www.scotland.gov.uk

COSLA www.cosla.gov.uk

Improvement Service www.improvementservice.org.uk

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