



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA  
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Councillor Merrick Cockell  
Leader of the Council

The Kensington and Chelsea  Partnership

30 November 2007

Rt. Hon. Hazel Blears MP  
Secretary of State  
Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London SW1E 5DU

Dear Hazel,

Like other London Local Strategic Partnerships, the Kensington and Chelsea Partnership (KCP) will be working with the Government Office for London over the coming months to develop a Local Area Agreement (LAA) under the new statutory framework.

I am writing as the Partnership's Chairman to let you know of the approach that we are intending to take in relation to the new LAA for Kensington and Chelsea.

The KCP's existing LAA began in April 2006 and dovetailed very effectively with the development of the second Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for Kensington and Chelsea (which was published the previous November). That strategy included a monitoring plan containing some 129 three-year targets and projects to deliver the strategy's aims and objectives, and we were able to prioritise a sub-set of these and incorporate them in the LAA. The LAA and monitoring plan have 16 months to run, and we are making very good progress. Eighty nine per cent of LAA indicators have improved. Eighty four per cent of LAA milestones have been reached. Sixty seven per cent of our community strategy targets are on track. Ninety three per cent of the community strategy projects are expected to be completed on time.

We are now embarking on the development of the Borough's third SCS ("SCS<sup>3</sup>"), which will be published in November 2008 and take effect from April 2009. We are excited at this prospect, for the following reasons:

- an innovative exercise in long-range planning ("RBKC 2028") concludes in May and will provide a firm foundation to the long-term vision in SCS<sup>3</sup>,

- consultation on the Core Strategy for our Local Development Framework coincides precisely with the consultation periods we envisage for SCS<sup>3</sup>, presenting an ideal opportunity to lock our spatial planning framework into our community strategy;
- the timing of SCS<sup>3</sup> will enable us to incorporate the findings of our first statutory Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on Health and Well-Being, and to reflect the priorities emerging from this assessment in the SCS<sup>3</sup> targets;
- we intend to build on the innovative programme of consultation and community engagement for SCS<sup>2</sup> (which was commended by the Audit Commission) to undertake an even more ambitious attempt to understand, respond to and incorporate the views of the many communities that live in Kensington and Chelsea;
- third-sector representation on the KCP is being strengthened and refreshed, providing an opportunity for even closer working with the sector to identify priorities and set targets that we can then work together to achieve;
- the recently completed mid-term review of SCS<sup>2</sup> identified some important new areas of work (for instance on climate change and worklessness) which we want to develop and consult the community upon during the development of SCS<sup>3</sup>, in order to develop meaningful baselines and set challenging and realistic targets in the SCS<sup>3</sup> delivery plan.

We support the Government's view (expressed variously in the operational guidance on LAAs, the draft statutory guidance on Strong Safe and Prosperous Communities and the Audit Commission proposals on CAA) that LAA targets should be founded on the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Partnership is therefore determined to ensure that the priorities emerging from SCS<sup>3</sup> are strongly reflected in Kensington and Chelsea's statutory LAA.

We note from the LAA operational guidance that Government expects that the majority of LAA targets will not be renegotiated during the three-year lifetime of an LAA.

From the position described above, however, you will appreciate that this is not a good time for the KCP to enter into a new set of binding three-year targets running from April 2008 to March 2011.

To do so would tie the Partnership's hands in relation to priorities emerging from the SCS<sup>3</sup> process. Indeed, it would be difficult to consult in good faith on the community's priorities for SCS<sup>3</sup> if these priorities have in effect been pre-empted by 3-year targets in the new LAA. It would also prevent us from exploiting the potential synergies between the new LAA and the information gathering exercises, public consultation and other opportunities mentioned above.

For these reasons we intend to propose to GOL that the targets in Kensington and Chelsea's new LAA should run for one year, to March 2009, and that they should be replaced by a new set of targets, identified during the SCS<sup>3</sup> process, to run for three years from April 2009. This would bring the LAA cycle into alignment with Kensington

and Chelsea's three-year SCS cycle, and deliver the strong relationship between the two that the Government wishes to see.

As mentioned above, we already have an effective framework and set of challenging targets in place, developed with strong community engagement and agreed less than two years ago. Partners have swung in behind them and are delivering well against them. Local people are seeing and feeling the benefits.

The unanimous and strong preference of the public, private, voluntary and community representatives on the KCP is therefore to transfer the targets from our existing LAA in to the new LAA, to let these stand as the "designated targets", and to let them run their course through to March 2009 when a new set of three-year targets (including a new set of designated targets) will take their place. These targets will be developed during the autumn and winter of 2008/09.

This timing is compatible with the process described in the recently-published LAA operational guidance. New designated targets would be negotiated with GOL as part of the annual review process, which is scheduled to take place at exactly the same time.

This approach will have ancillary benefits. We will avoid the pitfalls and confusion of having "new LAA" targets running alongside a set of "old LAA" targets for a year. Also, we expect to be able to collect baseline data on some or all of the new indicators in the national indicator set, allowing us to use these indicators with confidence to set LAA targets from April 2009.

The Royal Borough has a long-standing reputation as one of the best-run councils in the country. We have strong partners. The LSP is recognised as being as good as any. We believe we are as well-placed as anywhere in the country to deliver on national and local priorities. The approach the Partnership is taking will ensure that Kensington and Chelsea's Local Area Agreement really is developed by our local community, and that its priorities are owned by local partners.

We trust that you will feel able to endorse it.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' or 'L' shape followed by a wavy line.

c.c. Sir Simon Milton