

To: Communities and Partnership Scrutiny Committee

Date: 17 October 2011

Report of: Head of Policy, Culture and Communications

Title of Report: Policy, Partnerships and Consultation – Supplementary Paper

Supplementary Paper

Purpose of the Supplementary Paper: To supplement the “Policy, Partnerships and Consultation” report submitted for Communities and Partnership Scrutiny Committee, 17 October 2011

This paper provides additional information on:

- Reporting back mechanisms
- The Council’s priorities for engagement and outcomes from partnerships;
- How we make judgements about progress;
- How much we spend (time and money);
- Emerging new OSP priorities;
- Public influence through consultation;
- Distinguishing between consultation and research;
- Future role of scrutiny in policy development;
- What difference have partnerships made?

Introduction

- S1. This supplementary paper provides additional information as requested by Cllr Jim Campbell, Scrutiny Chair. The paper is set out under each heading of additional information. Peter McQuitty, Head of Service and officers from the Policy Team will be present at the meeting and will be happy to answer questions or provide greater clarification if needed.

Reporting back mechanisms

- S2. Paragraphs 28 and 29 of the “Policy, Partnerships and Consultation” report details member and officer involvement in partnerships and how information is shared through briefings, circulation of newsletters and updates in Council Matters.

- S3. We will welcome any thoughts and suggestions from the Committee on how reporting back mechanisms can be improved.

The Council's priorities for engagement and outcomes from the partnerships we are involved in

- S4. The Council's priorities for engagement and outcomes are aligned with those set out in the Corporate Plan and the Oxford Strategic Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy and the Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy.
- S5. The Council Leader and Chief Executive have stated the Council's continued commitment to the Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP) and its role to co-ordinate, resource and provide leadership. This view has been supported by Cross Party Working Group. The OSP's priorities are currently under review.
- S6. The Council continues to engage in other partnerships to promote the needs of the city and to work to ensure these are met, e.g. Local Enterprise Partnership. Many partnerships are under review as detailed in paragraphs 21 - 27 of the report.

How we make judgements about progress

- S7. Judgements about progress are based on the usual performance management methodologies. For example, the Regeneration Framework Steering Group has an action plan which will lead to the achievement of its objectives. This is agreed by the OSP. The Regeneration Framework Steering Group reports to the OSP on a regular basis with an update of delivery against the action plan. The Safer Communities work is monitored against the Safer Communities Partnership action plan. Strategies for engagement are embedded within those action plans

How much we spend (time and money)

- S8. The staffing resources are detailed in paragraph 5 of the report and total 2.7 full time equivalents working on policy, partnerships and consultation. Three days of the Strategic Policy and Partnerships Officer's time and three days of the Partnership Development Officer's time - making a 1.2 full time equivalent - are specifically focused on partnership activity.
- S9. The City Council has provided a supplies and services budget of £22,315 for 2011/12. This budget is used to support the co-ordination, administration and project work of the OSP and its sub groups. Additional Local Area Agreement Reward Money of over £50k has been secured to support projects.

Emerging new OSP priorities

- S10. The continuing and emerging new priorities for the OSP are listed in paragraph 17 of the report. This list is based on discussions held by the OSP Board and discussions outside of the Board (e.g. Cross Party Working Group). Further discussions and consultation will take place before the OSP's revised priorities are agreed and a new strategy and action plans adopted.

Public influence through Budget consultation

- S11. Consultation on the draft budget was carried out in December 2010 with the public - through an advertisement placed in the Oxford Mail and through the Council's website – as well as the Talkback citizen's panel and City Council staff. In total 615 respondents gave views including:
- 28 members of the public via the online survey;
 - 388 members of the public via the Talkback panel;
 - 199 members of City Council staff.
- S12. As a result of consultation there were a number of reinstated or additional items including:
- Energy advice and fuel poverty programme (part).
 - Contribution to community centres.
 - Contribution to community transport (year 1 only).
 - Support for activities for young people including free swimming, parking concessions at sports clubs, youth activities in East Oxford/ Littlemore.
 - Housing advice service provided by Shelter (part).
 - Funding for 2 street wardens.
- S13. With respect to improving consultation practice (paragraph 35 of the report) we agree that we should track and feedback on progress in a year.

Distinguishing between consultation and research

- S14. We are increasingly making a distinction between consultation and research. Where we are asking for help in forming options then this is clearly consultation. Where we would like to understand the views of the public on a proposal that is close to completion - perhaps to understand if there will be issues with implementation - this is more like research.

CONSULT - to provide information and obtain citizens/community feedback, for example, on priority setting; analysis; proposals. People are aware that they can influence the outcome.

RESEARCH - to seek/gather information and opinion, for example, to assist planning for change or evaluation.

Future role of scrutiny in policy development

- S15. Scrutiny might consider playing a more active role in policy review and development and review. In relation to consultation, Scrutiny might also consider, evaluating a small selection of consultations each year.

What difference have partnerships made?

- S16. Many of the issues that contribute to inequality in our city are beyond the control of individual local authorities and public bodies. It is essential, therefore that Oxford works hard to retain its current productive partnership arrangements that are aligned to the needs of the city.
- S17. The report outlined the successes of the OSP (paragraph 12) and the successes of the Oxfordshire Partnership (paragraph 20). It is our view that the Low Carbon

Oxford initiative and the Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation project (through the Regeneration Framework action plans) would not have existed with a clear focus on Oxford without mature and trusted partnership working in place in the city.

- S18. Arguably, partnership works more effectively where there is a duty on partners to work together. It is hard to see – given the different perceptions of the some of the partners - how the Breaking the Cycle of Deprivation project could have progressed without a duty being in place.
- S19. Some of the duties to cooperate have been removed from partners on the development of action plans, for example the Children’s Trust. However, new duties are in the process of being introduced, for example the Health Being Board. We need to be, and are, engaged in making the new structures work for the city.
- S20. The projects referred to above illustrate how the city council through partnerships (OSP and Oxfordshire Partnership) have shown leadership and brought partners together to a shared vision and priority. High quality data and needs assessment has been a valuable aspect of this work as shown by the importance of the data and needs assessment in the Regeneration Framework. The County’s adoption of breaking the cycle of deprivation as a priority area in its Sustainable Community Strategy is in part due to the efforts of the City Council and OSP in highlighting inequality and deprivation in the City. This work is now driven forward through the Regeneration Framework.
- S21. Both of these projects also illustrate the value of tackling issues in the city in a collaborative way. It is of credit to the city community that most of the largest employers are signed up to the Low Carbon Oxford Charter and that they recognise that greater results and wider benefits to the city are to be secured through partnership and collaboration.
- S22. Our early work on educational attainment, led by the city, is also showing signs that a collaborative and partnership approach will result in a shared action plan and better results rather than organisations working in isolation.

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