

To: Communities and Partnership Scrutiny Committee

Date: 17th October 2011

Item No:

Report of: Head of Policy, Culture and Communications

Title of Report: Policy, Partnerships and Consultation

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To report on:

- current arrangements for the Council's partnership work in the city and county;
- review of priorities for the Oxford Strategic Partnership
- public input into policy and decision making

Report approved by:

Finance: Martin Westmorland

Legal: Helen Lynch

Recommendation(s):

That this report is noted and that members of the Scrutiny Committee communicate their views on partnership working, priorities and public input into policy and decision making so that this can help inform the current review of the Oxford Strategic Partnership, the vision for the city and priorities.

Introduction

1. This report outlines the work of the Policy Team in policy, partnership and consultation work at the City Council.
2. Alongside this report members of the Policy Team together with the Leader of the Council will present and answer questions on current arrangements for the Council's partnership work in the city and county; review of priorities for the Oxford Strategic Partnership; and public input into policy and decision making

Policy team

3. The Policy Team is part of Policy, Culture and Communications managed by Peter McQuitty as Head of Service. The key functions of the team include:
 - Co-ordinating the production of the Corporate Plan;
 - Supporting policy review and the review of the Policy Framework;
 - Supporting policy development at a strategic partnership level;
 - Providing advice, support and co-ordination in relation to policy development across the Council;
 - Ensuring that there is alignment between the Council's corporate priorities and the supporting policy framework;
 - Co-ordinating and managing the work of the Oxford Strategic Partnership;
 - Co-ordinating and managing partnership working with other public sector bodies across Oxfordshire;
 - Co-ordinating the City Council's Safeguarding policy, procedures and implementation;
 - Leading on Fair Trade City status and membership of the City's Fair Trade Coalition;
 - Leading on special partnership and corporate projects as they emerge;
 - Providing a social research function to deliver high quality quantitative data to support policy development, service delivery, and project implementation;
 - Providing a consultation function to deliver high quality qualitative data to support policy development, service delivery, and project implementation;
 - Managing the Citizens' Panel, a core group of 1,000 residents.
4. The Policy Team supports the leadership role of members and officer of the Council through keeping them informed and aware of decisions being made that affect the city.
5. The team comprises of 2.7 full time equivalent posts as detailed below:

Val Johnson, Team Leader and Partnership Development Officer – 3 days per week

- Manages the team
- Leads on county and thematic partnership work and the City County Bilateral (Other 2 days per week paid by all Districts for developing cross district working and supporting the Oxfordshire County and Districts Chief Executive and Leaders meetings)

Sebastian Johnson, Strategic Policy and Partnerships Officer – Full time

- Manages and co-ordinates the work of the Oxford Strategic Partnership and its sub groups
- Writes and delivers policy briefings and the policy update in Council Matters

Mark Fransham, Social Research Officer – 2.5 days per week

- Leads all statistical and data analysis and is the link with the Oxfordshire Data Observatory
- Prepares chart of the month and the Oxford Profile

Margaret Melling, Consultation Officer (maternity cover) – 3 days per week

- Leads on the Council's main consultation work including managing Talkback and the Talkback Panel
- Co-ordinates and oversees other consultations through the Consultation Officers Group

Data analysis and research

6. The role of data analysis and research is key in ensuring that the needs of the city are well evidenced and is used to inform the city council's priorities and plans and influence other partnership policy and plans, such as the Oxfordshire Childrens Plan, public health policy and economic development.
7. Data analysis and research also keeps members and officers aware of key trends and issues facing the city. These are provided through the Oxford Profile, the statistics section on the website and the "Chart of the Month".
8. Data and research is also provided to other partners in the public, voluntary and private sectors. This information has been used to support the development of bids with other agencies, for example Big Lottery Fund, HCA funding and Heritage Lottery Fund.

Partnership working – Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP)

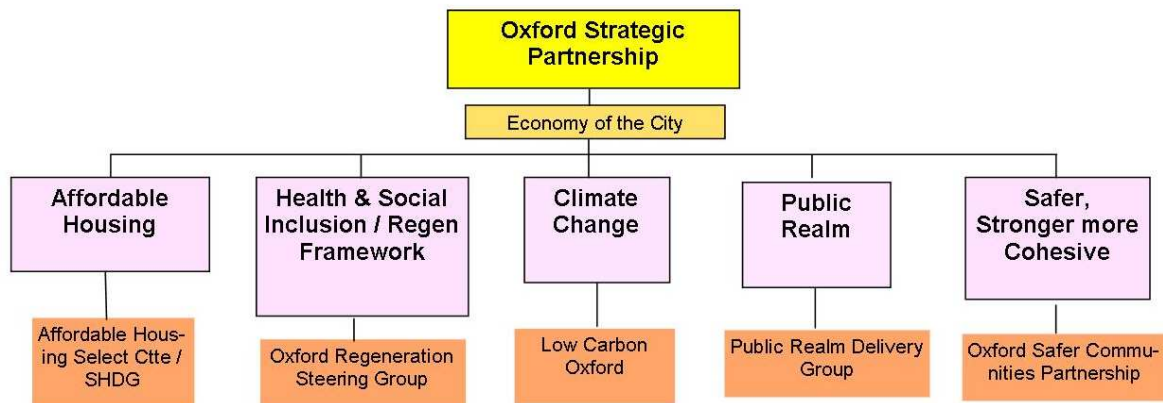
9. The Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP) was formed in 2003 following the introduction of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) as part of the Local Government Act in 2000. LSPs bring together, at a local level, the different parts of the public sector as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors working to a shared vision and set of priorities for an area (in this case Oxford city).
10. The OSP published its Sustainable Community Strategy in 2008 – "Oxford: A World-Class City for Everyone". The strategy is summarised as:

Our over-riding vision is that Oxford will be a world class city for everyone.

There will be a cross cutting theme of the economy in the city and five flagship issues where the OSP feels it can add value:

- *Affordable Housing*
- *Health and Social Inclusion*
- *Climate Change*
- *Quality of the Public Realm for Residents and Visitors*
- *Safer, Stronger, more Cohesive City*

11. The following image illustrates the structure of the OSP and its sub groups:



12. Key successes since 2008 include:

- Development and adoption of the Regeneration Framework and embedding the “Breaking the cycle of deprivation” work across the city and county local strategic partnerships
- Leading work in the city to explore development of a partnership action plan for improvement in educational attainment
- Delivery of the OSP Affordable Housing Select Committee’s report and recommendations which resulted in:
 - Improved relations with developers and the introduction of a developer forum
 - The work and findings of the Select Committee through the OSP cited as an exemplar by IDeA
 - Process and findings viewed positively by the HCA and thought to have had an impact on Oxford/Oxfordshire choice as a single conversation pilot area and the Barton regeneration funding.
- Launch of the Low Carbon Oxford initiative with organisations responsible for over half of the city’s carbon emissions committing to collaboratively reduce emissions by 3% each year and work to develop a more sustainable and green city. Low Carbon Oxford has assisted in securing over £250k funding from central Government to support community low carbon projects
- The forming of the public realm group, a partnership group overseeing the style and management of the public realm in the city. The group has overseen the development and publication of the popular Oxford Public Art and Architecture Maps.

The future of local strategic partnerships and the OSP

13. In the last 18 months we have seen a number of government policy initiatives and changes that have impacted on partnership working, these include:

- Deleting the Local Area Agreement
- Deleting the National Indicators
- Deleting regional bodies (SEEDA and GOSE)
- Deleting the Audit Commission and the National Framework of Standards
- Introduction of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)
- Changes to the Health and Well Being Board linked to the NHS reforms

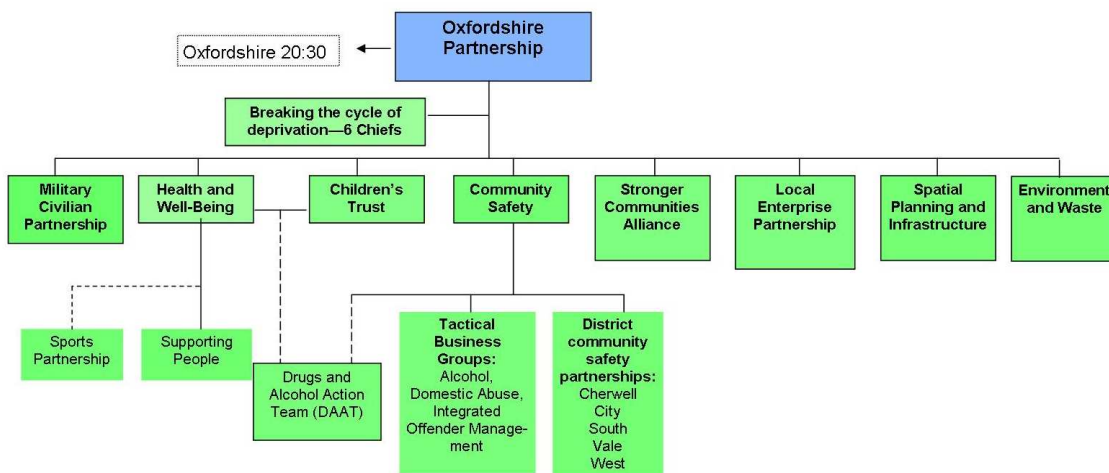
14. Government stated its intention in the Best Value Statutory Guidance to repeal the statutory duty to produce a Sustainable Community Strategy and the Localism Bill proposes to repeal section 4 of Local Government Act 2000. Until now this duty has been fulfilled through the work of local strategic partnerships (LSPs). Removal of the duty would, in effect, make the continued existence of LSPs a local decision.
15. The Board of the OSP has unanimously agreed that the partnership should continue. The City Council as the co-ordinating body (and provider of staffing resource) has stated its support for the continuation of the partnership. The Cross Party Working Group has stated its support for the continuation of the partnership.
16. Further consultation with existing partners, key employers in the city and other stakeholders is taking place on the future of the partnership, its priorities and membership.

Continuing and emerging new priorities for the OSP

17. The partnership is in the process of reviewing the current Sustainable Community Strategy and developing an updated vision and set of priorities. The continuing and emerging priorities and key issues include the following areas:
 - Economy and links to LEP
 - Educational Attainment
 - Youth Services
 - Older people’s services
 - Wireless Oxford
 - Public realm outside of city centre
 - Regeneration
 - Low Carbon City
 - Safer Oxford
 - Stronger Oxford

Partnership working – Oxfordshire Partnership and thematic partnerships

18. The following image illustrates the current structure of the Oxfordshire Partnership and the countywide thematic partnerships. It should be noted that this structure is under review.



19. The Priorities are set by the Oxfordshire Partnership in the County Sustainable Community Strategy “Oxfordshire 20:30”. The priority themes are:
 - A World Class Economy
 - Healthy and Thriving Communities
 - Environment and Climate Change
 - Reducing Inequalities and breaking the cycle of deprivation
20. Key successes through working with Oxfordshire partnerships include:
 - Development and adoption of the “Breaking the cycle of deprivation” work in both Oxford City and Banbury
 - Influencing the Oxfordshire Children and Young People Plan, to include homelessness and poverty issues
 - Leading work in the city to explore development of a partnership action plan for improvement in educational attainment
 - Improved Safeguarding arrangements for the city
 - Strengthening cross-district work leading to a greater city and district influence on decisions made at a county level
21. At a county level some changes to partnership structures are being proposed. It is likely that the Oxfordshire Partnership will meet only once a year and will maintain communication through newsletters and forum events. These will provide information and stimulate discussion on single topics
22. The Public Service Board, previously responsible for delivery of the County Strategy Oxfordshire 20:30 and the delivery of the Local Area Agreement, has stopped meeting but can be recalled if required.
23. The Oxfordshire 20:30 strategy is being revised and updated and accountability will be through the Oxfordshire Chief Executives Group (County, Districts, Primary Care Trust and Thames Valley Police).
24. The Oxfordshire and Districts Leaders Group meet to discuss issues that affect cross district and county wide issues and priorities, e.g. Military Covenant.
25. Some of the thematic partnerships which operated under the auspices of the Oxfordshire Partnership will remain but without the current lines of accountability. There will be a new duty to have a statutory Health and Wellbeing Board which will incorporate the work of the Children’s Trust.
26. The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is the other principle forum for joint work and has been successful in securing an Enterprise Zone in the Science Vale area.
27. The Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership will remain. The role of the Stronger Communities Alliance and the County Community Safety Partnership are still under review.

Member and Officer Involvement and Feedback

28. The following table illustrates member and officer involvement in partnerships

Partnership	Lead Member / Officer	Co-ordinating Officer
Oxford Strategic Partnership	Cllr Bob Price	Sebastian Johnson

	Peter Sloman	
Oxford City Regeneration Steering Group	David Edwards	Val Johnson Graham Stratford
Low Carbon Oxford	Cllr John Tanner	Jenny Davidson Sebastian Johnson
Public Realm Delivery Group	Cllr Bob Price	Sebastian Johnson
Oxford Safer Communities Partnership	Cllr Bob Timms Tim Sadler	Richard Adams
City County Bilateral	Cllr Bob Price Peter Sloman	Val Johnson
Oxfordshire Partnership	Cllr Bob Price Peter Sloman	Val Johnson
Oxfordshire and District Leaders Group	Cllr Bob Price Peter Sloman	Val Johnson
Oxfordshire Chief Executives Group	Peter Sloman	Val Johnson
Military Civilian Partnership	Mike Newman	Val Johnson
Health and Well Being	Cllr Antonia Bance (representation under review)	Val Johnson
Childrens Trust	Cllr Antonia Bance	Val Johnson
Oxfordshire Community Safety Partnership	Cllr Bob Timms	Richard Adams
Stronger Communities Alliance	Representation under review	Angel Cristofoli Val Johnson
Local Enterprise Partnership	Cllr Bob Price	Michael Crofton-Briggs
Spatial Planning and Infrastructure	Cllr Bob Price	Mark Jaggard
Environment and Waste Partnership	Cllr John Tanner	Jenny Davidson

29. Officers ensure that relevant information is shared with members and officers. This is done through email briefings before and after the meetings take place to enable relevant officers and members to comment and be well briefed. Partnership newsletters are circulated to all members and key officers for information. Short updates are published in Council Matters.

Links to the corporate priorities

30. There are strong links between partnership priorities and the Council's corporate priorities especially relating to Low Carbon Oxford and the Regeneration Framework.
31. The Affordable Housing Select Committee findings and recommendations informed the action plan for the Strategic Housing Delivery Group and the Public Realm Delivery Group's work is influencing policy in culture and arts.

Securing funding and resource

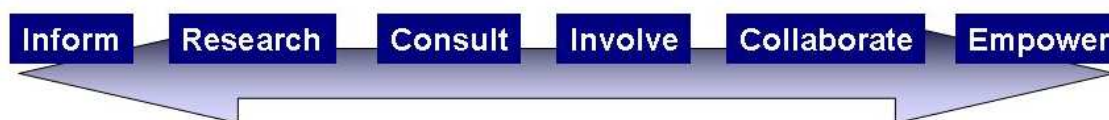
32. Through our cross district working we have been able to influence the expenditure of Local Area Agreement (LAA) funding to support the Council's priorities and the

work of the Oxford Strategic Partnership. The Partnership has secured over £50,000 from LAA reward funding.

Consultation and public input into policy and decision making

33. We consult on-line via the consultation portal; face to face, individually and in groups; and via our Talkback Citizen's panel.
34. In the past year our consultation with residents has had an impact on policy. Examples of changes as a result of consultation include:
 - Amendments to 33 of the 93 sites in the "Sites and Housing Issues and Options" consultation
 - Establishing a new "Friends of the Museum" group
 - Reports shared with Thames Valley Police that help set priorities
 - Reinstatement of a number of items proposed to be removed from the Council's budget
35. Work to improve consultation practice is currently focussed on:
 - Publicising consultation and how to "have your say"
 - Publicity campaign for Talkback (including profiles and photos of Talkback panellists) currently in development
 - Sharing "you said, we did"
 - Extending access to consultation
 - Working with "Harder to Reach" groups such as MyLifeMyChoice, Oxfordshire Unlimited and Oxford's BME communities.
 - Finding alternative approaches in areas of the city with lower response rates (including, for example, recent focus group sessions with Talkback panellists in Blackbird Leys)
 - Evaluating and sharing findings
 - Continuing to share and develop the City Council Consultation Toolkit
 - Sharing experience and best practice across the Council via the Consultation Officers group
 - Understanding the role of consultation within the wider "spectrum" of engagement

Spectrum of Engagement



How do we improve public engagement and input into partnership work?

36. The OSP Board has committed to producing an annual report and holding an annual stakeholder event.
37. It is recognised that the improved engagement with neighbourhoods is required. To achieve this we would like to extend Talkback to have neighbourhood panels and these would link to and inform the Neighbourhood Forums. This would require additional resources.

Conclusion

38. No one organisation can solve all of the city's problems and challenges so a partnership and collaborative approach is required. Initiatives such as Low Carbon Oxford illustrate that the results of partnership and collaboration are greater than those that can be achieved by working in silos
39. Consultation, and high quality research and needs analysis are vital to inform our partnership and corporate priorities and policy development
40. We will value any thoughts and suggestions that Scrutiny Committee may have with respect to our policy and partnership work. The Committee's views on the future of the Oxford Strategic Partnership and the vision and priorities for the future will be fed back to the OSP as part of the wider discussions and consultation taking place with stakeholders in the city.

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List of background papers: None

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