

Oxford Strategic Partnership Terms of Reference

What is the Oxford Strategic Partnership?

The Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP) was founded in 2003 and brings together senior representatives from the public, business, community and voluntary sectors. The OSP helps to provide direction for the city's future, respond to local priorities and engage more effectively with local concerns. This partnership for the city promotes collaboration and openness and provides opportunities to access funding and share resources more easily.

The OSP is an influencer, not an operational organisation. It brings organisations together to work in partnership, identifying strategic city challenges that will benefit from collaboration, and prioritising them based on where the partnership can add most value.

OSP Vision and Mission

The OSP seeks to facilitate, through effective collaboration between local agencies and partners, a thriving city and surrounding area where everyone enjoys a good quality of life - environmentally, economically and socially, and where long standing inequalities are addressed.

OSP Aims

- Identify current major issues and concerns that will benefit from collective intervention
- Identify and engage relevant partners, and facilitate their working together to develop and implement collaborative interventions
- Empower partners and communities to take action
- Evaluate outcomes to inform future issues and concerns

How the OSP will achieve its aims

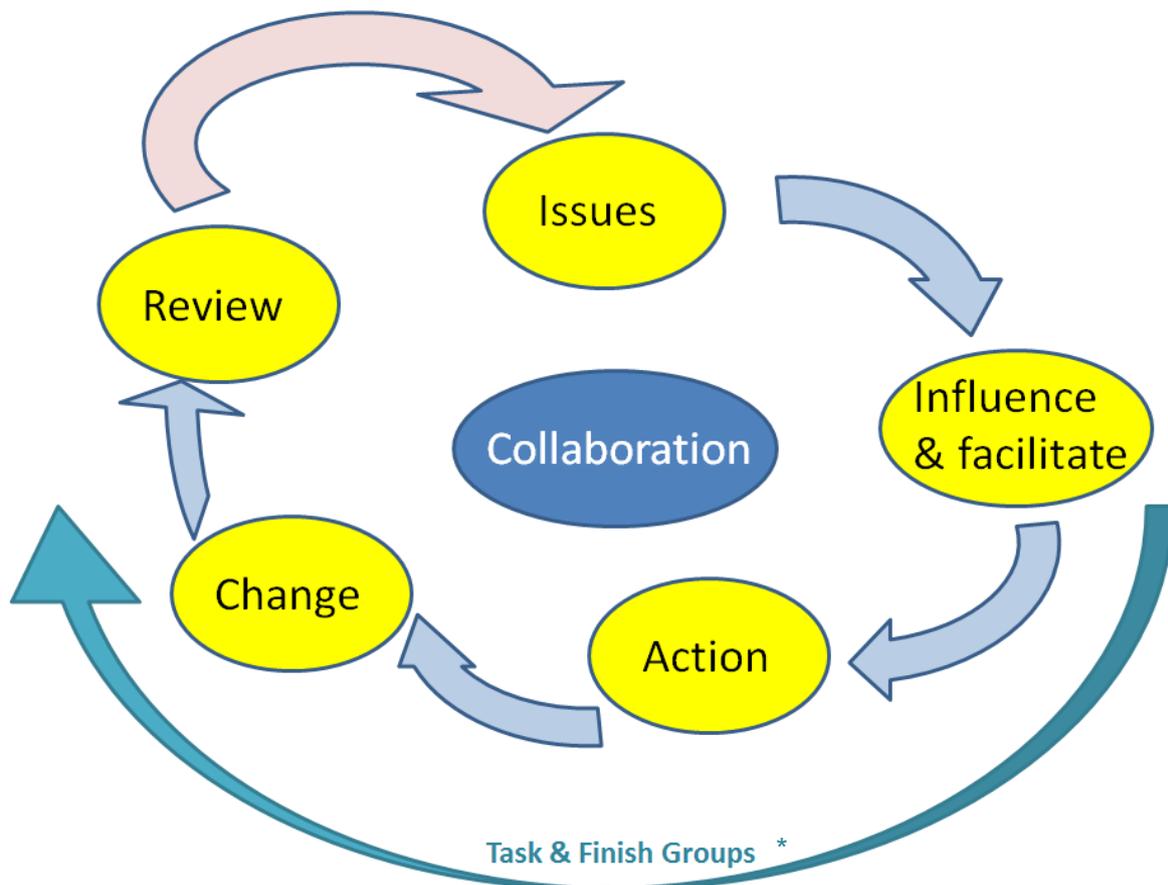
At the heart of the Partnership is the concept, and the reality, of collaboration.

Around this, the Partnership will operate a cyclical process where the OSP:

- (i) highlights issues it has identified to a wider audience
- (ii) exerts influence to facilitate change through collaboration
- (iii) prompts actions as a result of (ii)
- (iv) reviews outcomes of changes made and progress against original objectives

Through this model the OSP will aim to ensure that the right issues are prioritised and that actions taken are results-oriented.

The following diagram summarises the approach.



* Task and Finish Groups would be led by an appropriate person / organisation, with the knowledge, expertise and networks to make things happen. This may be through the public sector, linked directly to an existing area of responsibility and work, or through the private sector, linked to an area of expertise and/or interest. (See Appendix C)

Steering Group

In this context, the OSP works through a series of meetings, with Partnership members represented around the table. This 'Steering Group' gives direction and supports key work streams, by making decisions on priorities and determining where and how to influence/facilitate allocation of resources and specific areas of work.

The role of the Steering Group is to:

- steer the direction of OSP, ensuring that a strategic approach is taken to focusing attention and resources on areas of concern;

- identify and agree priorities, informed by the ability of the partnership, through its influence, to make a tangible difference;
- set objectives for specific areas of work;
- maintain oversight of the work of the sub-groups responsible for the strategic themes (see Appendix B), and receive regular reports on progress, outcomes and challenges;
- establish Task and Finish Groups (see Appendix C) to undertake specific projects within agreed (short-medium term) timescales;
- recruit the right people from within relevant organisations to be members of the Task and Finish Groups;
- review outcomes and assess impact;
- develop a rolling 3-year plan, clearly articulating OSP priorities;
- review and revise the plan on an annual basis;
- raise the visibility of the work of OSP, highlighting progress and outcomes, in order to facilitate and deliver wider engagement.

In support of these specific tasks, the Steering Group will:

- develop and promote open and accountable partnership working with a city-wide perspective, encompassing the city of Oxford and its environs;
- ensure relevant links to county-wide thematic partnerships and other groups;
- promote an inclusive approach which benefits all citizens, residents, and workers; addressing inequalities of access and outcomes;
- apply the principles of sustainability, and the need to balance environmental, social and economic concerns, to achieve long-term improvements in quality of life.

The Steering Group has adopted a set of principles - based on the Nolan principles for public life - to guide its actions, and promote public confidence in its actions. These are shown in Appendix A.

Steering Group meetings

There will be six meetings per year, one of which will be the longer Annual Planning and Review meeting. Operational arrangements are outlined in Appendix E.

Role of Steering Group members

- To act as champions for the work of OSP, including the four strategic themes, specific priority areas, and the work of the Task and Finish groups.
- To provide senior level representation of their organisation on the Partnership.
- To ensure implementation/delivery of partnership priorities, where appropriate, within and through their organisation.

- To represent and promote the wider interests of the city at a county, regional, national, and international level.
- To exert influence across a range of organisations and sectors to shape resource planning and deliver agreed outcomes in partnership with the community.
- To provide a co-ordinated route for channelling new funding and development opportunities into the city.

Membership of the OSP

Organisations in the Partnership are key players in the Oxford community.

Partner organisations will have a representative on the Steering Group. In the case of councils, there will be two members – a councillor and an officer. In addition, given that the focus of the Partnership is on the City of Oxford, the leader of the opposition at Oxford City Council will be invited to attend as an observer – welcome to contribute to the debate, but not holding a vote on the rare occasions that voting may be necessary.

Representatives will be sufficiently senior to represent their organisation’s views, to contribute to decisions, to make commitments, and to secure engagement of their organisation as appropriate. Most importantly, they will be sufficiently senior to influence and guide their organisation’s actions to support OSP objectives.

Each partner organisation will identify a single person to be their lead representative, reflecting the requirements above. It is expected that this person will attend most meetings. However, where attendance is not possible, or where a senior colleague may be better placed to contribute to a specific agenda, they may choose to send an appropriately qualified alternate.

In addition, members can invite additional guests from their organisation for specific agenda items, where this will add value to the discussion.

Criteria for membership

All partner organisations are selected on the basis of their being able to contribute directly to delivery of OSP’s vision and mission, and achievement of its aims.

Partner organisations will come from three categories and meet the following criteria:

- Public sector:
 - Statutory body with responsibility for things impacting on the quality of life in Oxford
- Private sector:

- Located in Oxford
- Having a significant impact on the City and/or its environs
- Having networking and influencing capacity
- Representative organisations (including community and voluntary sectors):
 - Wide reach – i.e. representing many organisations/individuals
 - A focus on issues directly impacting on the City and its environs
 - An Oxford base

The Chair of OSP will be selected from the organisations that have membership. Tenure will normally be for 3 years, and it is expected that this role will move around the organisations in the Partnership.

A Deputy Chair will be selected on the same principles, also with a 3-year tenure. Ideally the chair and deputy chair will not change at the same time – i.e. their start dates will be staggered – to facilitate effective handover and continuity.

A list of members is given at Appendix D.

Oxford Strategic Partnership Guiding Principles

The Partnership Steering Group have adopted a set of principles - based on the Nolan principles for public life - to guide its actions, and promote public confidence in its actions.

These principles apply to all partners when acting on behalf of the Partnership or while on Partnership business.

- 1. Selflessness.** Partners should take decisions and serve only in the public interest and not for private gain.
- 2. Integrity & Honesty.** Partners should not place themselves in any situation where their integrity may be questioned, or place themselves under improper influence in the course of their duties. This includes the declaration of relevant private interests.
- 3. Objectivity.** Partners should make decisions based solely on merit.
- 4. Accountability.** Partners should be accountable to the public for their actions, decisions, and the manner in which they carry out their partnership duties. They should co-operate fully with any scrutiny appropriate to their role in the Partnership.
- 5. Transparency & Accessibility.** Partners will ensure that information relating to their work with the Partnership is available to the public, and will work to make this information as accessible as possible.
- 6. Openness & Personal Judgement.** Partners should be prepared to be as open as possible whilst taking into account the wider public interest. They should also have the freedom to make and justify personal judgements based on available evidence.
- 7. Respect & Equality.** Partners should actively promote equality and act in a non-discriminatory manner.
- 8. Stewardship.** Partners should nurture and promote the successful development of the Partnership, ensuring that it applies its resources appropriately and operates in accordance with the law.
- 9. Leadership.** Partners should promote and support these principles by example, and act in a way that preserves public confidence.

OSP Strategic Themes

Since its inception in 2003 the OSP has established four sub-groups working on: Economic Development, Growth and Regeneration; Stronger Communities; Low Carbon City; and Safer Communities

As a result of the OSP Review in 2017, it was agreed that these four existing priority work areas are all still relevant, and should be consolidated as 'business as usual'.

Economic Development, Growth and Regeneration

The OSP's Economic Growth Steering Group (EGSG) leads on:

- city region focus to deliver the Oxford Economic Growth Strategy Action Plan and feed into, and support, the OxLEP (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership) SEP (Strategic Economic Plan) delivery
- oversee and support the work of Smart Oxford
- continue to drive and co-ordinate business engagement through the EGSG's business engagement framework.

Stronger Communities

The Stronger Communities Steering Group brings together key organisations that contribute towards the development of stronger communities through addressing inequality and poverty, and increasingly focuses on issues of Health and Wellbeing.

Low Carbon City – being taken forward by Low Carbon Oxford.

Low Carbon Oxford is a network of organisations with a shared vision of Oxford as a low carbon city. Over 40 diverse organisations are working together to achieve the city's very ambitious target of reducing emissions in Oxford by 40% by 2020.

Safer Communities – being taken forward by Oxford Safer Communities Partnership (OSCP)

Oxford Safer Communities Partnership (OSCP) was established in 1998 and works to address local community safety concerns and ensure that all partners tackle those crimes that affect our community.

OSP maintains oversight of these themes through regular reporting to OSP meetings. This ensures that the OSP can give a strategic steer, identify areas of common interest and initiate further collaboration, as appropriate, whilst also giving the theme leads the ability to flag concerns and identify blocks to progress which the OSP may be able to address.

Each theme reports to the Partnership twice per year, using a short template designed to focus on the key issues of progress and challenge. This:

- keeps the Steering Group updated on their work;
- enables opportunities for collaboration between the themes to be identified;
- provides the opportunity to consider potential areas for Task and Finish Group projects;
- highlights challenges that could be addressed by the Steering Group to unblock barriers and/or facilitate greater progress; and
- enables the Steering Group to champion the work of priority areas to a wider audience at key points in time.

Task and Finish Groups

From January 2018 the Partnership uses a “task and finish” philosophy to research and identify solutions to key challenges (issues).

This way of working provides the catalyst to take the circle from influence to review (see diagram on page 2).

The Task and Finish Groups bring together appropriate individuals, with the knowledge and passion to engage the right partners in pursuit of creative solutions.

The Task and Finish groups ensure that there is follow up, by taking responsibility for identifying and reviewing outcomes. This in turn contributes to an updated understanding of the situation and, in some instances, may lead to new or related issues being identified for inclusion in the list of issues being considered for future work – thus feeding back in to the OSP’s rolling programme.

Modus operandi

The main challenge is producing an exact definition of the problem to be addressed, and this process can take some time. However, that investment of time is valuable because, once the definition is understood, work can proceed quickly.

For any particular project, the right people have to be identified as members of the Group. These may come from within OSP partner organisations or from organisations sitting outside the Partnership. The key thing in making the model effective is to engage the right people with the right knowledge and skills.

Each T&F Group will determine its own working arrangements, with a clear project end date and regular reporting to the Partnership.

Regardless of who chairs the Group, its connection to the Partnership will usually be assured through an existing OSP Steering Group member, who will maintain regular contact.

Oxford Strategic Partnership Steering Group meetings

There will be four meetings per year, one of which may be extended for annual planning and review or arranged separately.

Regular quarterly meetings will operate as follows:

- 10:30 – 13:00. Refreshments from 10:15 and with a light lunch until 13:30.
- 2 major agenda items
- Bi-annual updates from the 4 strategic themes – based on a template, with the objectives of monitoring progress, addressing issues and identifying areas of commonality in order to deliver the benefits of collaboration.
1/2 themes may be requested to present their update depending on interest from the partnership.
- Reports from Task and Finish Groups, as appropriate. At key points, including conclusion, these may form one of the two major agenda items.

Annual planning and review meeting (to be confirmed):

- Purpose: to produce the first formal 3-year plan
- Annual Planning and Review meeting in November each year
Purpose: to review progress and outcomes; refresh priorities; and revise the 3-year plan accordingly
- 9.30 – 2.00pm, with morning and lunch breaks

Location:

Meetings will normally be hosted by member organisations on their premises, and it is incumbent upon members to be proactive in offering to lead on this. When an alternative 'partner venue' cannot be arranged, Oxford Town Hall will be used.