

Thriving Communities Strategy

Group Discussions Thematic Analysis Report

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Background

This report details findings from the thematic analysis of feedback received during group sessions to discuss the Thriving Communities Strategy (TCS) Discussion paper found [here](#).

Prior to developing the discussion paper ten group discussions and one system wide conversation were held. Feedback from those discussions was analysed and used to shape the contents of the discussion paper. A report detailing the findings of these conversations can be found [here](#).

The purpose of the TCS discussion paper is to detail Oxford City Council's plan for how we set out on a journey to build back fairer, work with communities and collaborate with partners to ensure that everyone in Oxford can access leisure, culture and community opportunities and also, just as importantly, to give community organisations, partners, members and officers the opportunity to comment on our plans before the final Thriving Communities Strategy is produced.

As well as consulting widely with partners and external organisations, there is a cross party working group as part of the governance to develop the Thriving Communities strategy.

Objectives

- To give community organisations, partners, officers and members from across Oxfordshire the opportunity to comment on Oxford City Council's Thriving Communities Strategy discussion paper prior to producing the Thriving Communities Strategy.

Methodology

- Online and face to face group discussions were held over 27 sessions between July and September 2022. An email address (TCS@oxford.gov.uk) was also set up for feedback from partners and organisations.
- The sessions were attended by a wide range of organisations from across Oxfordshire including members of community organisations, partner organisations, Oxfordshire County Council as well as Oxford City members and officers. Further details of participants can be found [here](#).
- Participants were asked to feedback on the TCS discussion paper. In some sessions they were asked to discuss specific questions, tailored according to the audience, in others a general discussion was had. A spreadsheet detailing which questions were discussed in each session can be found [here](#).
- Comments made during these discussions were recorded and each one was assigned a 'theme'. These themes have been analysed to identify the most common. A spreadsheet containing a count of all themes can be found [here](#).

Overview of Strands

The sessions were grouped according to the following three strands.

Strand 1 – Strategic overview

Group discussions with Oxford City Council officers including the Corporate Management Team at OCC, the internal ODG group and members of the Oxford Strategic Partnership. Three strand 1 group discussions took place in total.

Strand 2 – Whole System conversations

Group discussions with internal and external groups including representatives from community and cultural partners as well as Oxford City Council members, Oxfordshire County Council, the ODS (Oxford Direct Services) Exec Team and the EDI (Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion) steering Group. The purpose of this strand was to have city-wide conversations to update on progress, to work collaboratively, to help achieve an informed insight, and to make sure we are aligning work to achieve our aims. Nineteen strand 2 group discussions took place.

Strand 3 – Locality conversations

Group discussions with external groups. Discussions in this strand included a wide range of people. A number of these discussions took place in person during community events such as the Cutteslowe Play Day, the West Oxford Fun day event, the Northway summer holidays' activities programme and the Eid Extravaganza as well as with the Lived Experience Advisory Forum. This strand served the same purpose as strand 2 with locality based inclusive conversations that involved community based stakeholders who may not have or been able to participate in strand 2 or may have requested a bespoke conversation. Please note that a number of strand 2 participants were asked if they would like to have a strand 3 conversation but they preferred to take part in a strand 2 discussion as it enabled them to network with other groups and organisations.

Asylum Welcome were also asked to conduct research with refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants living in Oxford. In total 21 participants were consulted with in total and three in-person group consultation sessions as well as ten individual phone interviews. A link to this report can be found on [page 27](#) of this report.

Summary of findings

As is perhaps to be expected from discussions that focused on a Thriving Communities Strategy, feedback from many of the participants was concerned with community involvement & engagement and how important this is, to not only ensure that the strategy has the right focus, but that it is also a success. Participants also touched on themes of inclusivity and accessibility; that everyone should be listened to and that the aims and outcomes of the strategy must be accessible by all.

Concern for community involvement & engagement was often woven throughout other themes. For example, creating a communications' plan was considered important so that all communities understand the aims of the strategy and that measuring its success should be linked to how engaged communities are.

Furthermore when asked during community events which of the strategy's 4Ps (People, Pride, Place and Progress) was the most important most participants felt it was People.

Many participants fed back the importance of partnership working with some offering their support and advice as to who we should partner with. Others focused more on the practicalities of the strategy; i.e. how this strategy will align with others, the need for a clear action plan and how the aims of the strategy will actually be embedded.

It was clear that a number of participants felt they wanted to know more about how we will actually deliver the strategy, what will actually change as a result and who will be responsible. Some talked about governance and felt strongly that a strategy such as this needs an overall lead who will ultimately be responsible for its delivery.

We also learnt that participants feel it is important that we have some way of measuring the success of the strategy and how we might use data and insight to do this. Others flagged the need for meaningful measurement and ensuring that we use story-telling and case studies to illustrate the impact of the strategy and what good outcomes look like.

Just as useful as understanding what participants felt was important was hearing their feedback on what they felt was missing or did not have enough focus in the discussion paper. Examples included a breakdown of the costs involved, more focus on equal access to green spaces and their importance for improving mental and physical health as well as the need to make more mention of physical activity, to give just a few examples.

Overall these conversations were rich, enlightening and informative with many wide ranging themes discussed. The report below gives further details of these themes as well as recommendations for the structure, development and implementation of the Thriving Communities Strategy.

[Thematic Analysis of all Group Discussions](#)

Before detailing the most common themes, it is worth highlighting that across all strands there were participants who made positive comments about the discussion paper.

'Really good read, if done right - it is fantastic'.

In particular several participants really liked the six principles laid out in the discussion paper and were pleased to see these clearly defined.

'It's unusual to see principles set out as clearly as this & acknowledging the importance of relationships & working together'.

'I was surprised (and pleased!) to see principles like 'doing with' and 'collaboration' included. These aren't ideas I would've associated with a policy document'.

The discussion paper is therefore a good start from which we can build on.

'A good start that is building on existing things'.

Community Involvement and Engagement

As perhaps is to be expected from group discussions that included a number of representatives from community organisations; community involvement & engagement was the most common theme overall. This theme was mentioned mainly in strand 2 and 3 conversations.

A number of participants felt that ensuring that communities are involved and engaged is crucial, not only to understand what is important to those communities and to support in the implementation of the strategy, but also as way of measuring how successful the strategy is. Some participants referred to the importance of 'collaboration' with residents and a number of them thought that collaborating effectively with communities is key to achieving the aims of the strategy.

'Collaborating is vital - ideas and suggestions that come from groups themselves are much more likely to be acted on than those imposed/suggested from above'

Others felt that community involvement and engagement is in fact what is missing from the discussion paper and that we need to ensure that we are really listening to what communities want as this may not always align with our aims. Others felt that 'community empowerment' was important, in other words 'doing with, not to' and that we need to work with communities to empower them to find their own solutions.

'Empowerment rather than solutions/options handed to people'

A number of participants simply raised the question - have we consulted and listened to communities about what they want. Others suggested how this could be done e.g. focus groups. A few participants mentioned the need to reward and incentivise communities for their involvement:

'What we as professionals have to say is irrelevant. We need to be having grass roots conversations with our communities. They are the key to this strategy'.

'Clarify process and pathways through which communities can contribute and how'

'Using buddy systems (community led) could help to ensure feedback is voiced, heard and recorded'

'Incentivising and ensuring the community members engaged are respected and their time is valued. Must have resources available to facilitate this in order to recognise and reward'

members of the community that are 'stepping up'

The theme of community involvement and engagement links to a number of other themes, namely **community experience** and how this can be used to demonstrate impact, as well as **inclusion and diversity**. A number of participants felt it was important to ensure that we have reached out to all of Oxford's diverse communities, that everyone is listened to and that all voices are heard.

'Develop ways to reach all of the community and communicate to everyone to ensure 'all voices' are heard'

Measuring outcomes

This was the second most mentioned theme overall and was raised in most discussion groups. A number of participants mentioned the need for 'meaningful measurement'. 'Measuring outcomes' had a number of sub-themes:

- 1) The need to ensure that outcomes are measurable as a way of gauging the impact of the strategy.
- 2) The need to determine exactly what we are going to measure.
- 3) Ways to measure outcomes including frequent questionnaires and community focus groups.
- 4) The need for meaningful measurement.

'Aims should be measurable - how will we know if we have achieved for example a vibrant economy?'

'Use meaningful ways to measure. This is something we are starting to look at within how we monitor supported accommodation. Some data can be useful but gathering case studies, mapping of clients journey etc. can be more useful to identify what has worked well in individual cases and comparing with why this may not have worked for others'.

Clarity

This theme was one of the most common and was mentioned across a number of groups. The need for clarity related to several aspects namely:

- 1) The terminology and jargon: For some there was terminology and jargon in the discussion paper that was unclear or needed to be defined. For example how exactly do we define 'thriving' or what is meant by 'equitable and supportive' or 'healthy place shaping'?

This was particularly the case in the 'Children & Young People Summer Holiday Activities' group discussion where a number of participants highlighted the need to clarify some of the terms used and that some of the language to describe the outcomes was confusing.

'Many Young People felt some wording was confusing. The words "equitable and supportive" could be replaced with "equal and helpful'

One participant felt that the language we use could be softer and more inclusive.

'Use softer language - i.e. Inclusive, fair, more supportive, safe space/s, feel supported rather than help, do you feel better supported, somewhere to go (right place, first time).'

Feedback from one partner via email also suggested that we need to make the strategy sound less 'corporate'.

- 2) Length of the paper: Some participants felt that the discussion paper was too wordy and long and that it should be simplified so that it is shorter, easier to read and to understand. Some suggested we produce a summary version. Some participants also raised the need for the strategy to be accessible, for example one participant asked if we plan to produce a Braille version.

This links to another theme, that of language and how, for residents whose first language isn't English, this could be a barrier. Therefore clear, simple language is important. A few asked if we plan to produce versions of the strategy in difference languages.

'Overall the language used and themes could be simplified more in plain English to make sure (it is) really accessible.'

- 3) Examples: Some participants suggested we use real examples and stories to clarify exactly what we mean by good practice. Other participants commented on the need to use real examples and stories to illustrate exactly how we have achieved our stated outcomes.

'Practically what does it mean for me? Give real examples'

Delivering the Strategy

Another commonly mentioned theme, particularly in the strand 2 city-wide conversations, was how the strategy is actually going to be delivered and who is responsible for delivery. Some participants wanted to know what is actually going to change if this strategy is delivered.

'More important to think about what this actually means in terms of delivery'

There was some cynicism (a few comments only) about whether we will actually be able to deliver this strategy in its entirety with a few participants stating they had seen this sort of thing before and that nothing had really changed!

'Heard it all before. What are we really going to do about it?'

Linked to delivering the strategy were comments relating to governance of the strategy and

who ultimately is responsible for its delivery. A number of participants felt that there must be a clear, overall lead who is responsible for this. Others participants felt that it was important that everyone understands the part they play in the strategy's delivery and that roles are clear.

'A champion to lead - without a champion, direction can be lost'

Partnership Working

The importance of working with relevant partners was another key theme. This theme was most commonly mentioned in relation to strategy delivery and how partners can help with this.

In most cases participants were simply making the point that partnership working is needed but some participants did mention specific organisations and/or community groups that they felt we should partner with for delivery or were offering their support as one of our partners. A list of these suggested partners can be found [here](#).

'Importance of Partnership working and joining things up'

Aligning the TCS with other strategies

Linked to partnership working was the theme of aligning the TCS with other internal and external strategies where relevant. This was highlighted by a number of participants. Some participants mentioned the County Council and the need to not only partner with them for this piece of work but also to ensure we are aligned with County strategies where appropriate.

Some participants mentioned specific strategies that they feel the TCS should be aligned with. A list of these can be found [here](#).

A few participants mentioned the need to signpost to other relevant strategies from within the TCS document itself and to make it easy to access all related and connected strategies in one place.

'Ensure action plans are aligned and not duplicated; Reference other external strategies (e.g. health, County) and demonstrate full integration; Identify people with specialist knowledge to read through strategies and pick out key links'

'Make some form of infographic/mind map that shows how strategies connect'

Communication

This theme was mentioned by a number of participants; that is the need to ensure residents, partners and internal service areas understand exactly what our plans are and what this strategy aims to achieve. Several participants talked about awareness and the need to raise awareness of this strategy. Some participants suggested that we create a

communications' plan.

Other participants talked about communication in terms of the need to communicate effectively with members of the public to let them know what is happening within their communities.

'We need a Comms plan and to join the dots and signpost – a centralised website?'

'Keeping a handle on what's happening in the community and sharing knowledge and communicating with local teams to strengthen their understanding'

'Improve communication channels to allow people to be aware of what is available within the community'

A few suggested how we best communicate with residents and that this could be tailored to different communities.

'Hard copy newsletter is needed for people to know what is going on, but more is needed i.e. a city council column in Oxford Mail'

An officer from the County Council suggested via email that we should be included in the Oxfordshire Live Well platform - www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/livewell

Data and Insight

Another common theme was that of 'data and insight' and how this should be used to demonstrate the impact of the strategy. A few participants suggested what data and insight could be used and some mentioned the need to ensure we are using data and insight for the purposes of continual learning and to review the impact of the strategy ongoing.

Some participants mentioned the use of qualitative data, including storytelling and case studies, others mentioned the use of quantitative data e.g. examples of decreasing figures – i.e. child obesity. Some felt both should be used.

'Qualitative plus quantitative (Social Return on Investment for some aspects but also stories that talk about people's journeys)'

*'Meaningful and qualitative data is fantastic, but we can't forget traditional quantitative data. As best practice, we should use both as both sets of data are of equal importance'.
'(Use of) perception surveys to understand what communities value'*

Funding and costs

Two main strands sit under the theme of funding and costs.

1) Funding the strategy: Some participants felt that details of how the strategy is actually

going to be funded and the costs involved is currently missing and should be included. A few also mentioned how restricted funding currently is.

'Reference to costs – what will it cost to actually implement the strategy'

'Raised again the question of funding and who is delivering. The strategy needs to show there's an element of spend to make this work, part of showing a real commitment that we can be held to.'

2) Other participants mentioned funding in relation to ensuring that residents know how to access funds and making this more accessible.

'How to support communities to access available funding and to make access to funding easier'

'Funding strands to be more accessible - simple things like: Easy read format, brail, audio options not just text based'.

Green Spaces

The need to consider green spaces and how these could be used was another fairly common theme, particularly from the whole system conversations held on 28th July.

A number of participants felt that reference to green spaces needed more focus in the discussion paper. Others highlighted the link between lack of access to green spaces and poverty & deprivation as well the importance of green spaces for health & wellbeing.

'Not much detail on green spaces. Some parts of Oxford are lacking in green space. Need to talk to communities about what they need'.

'Very little information about green spaces and how to improve equity of access.'

'Working to help with green space strategies to make sure they meet the needs of communities, for health and wellbeing, as well as nature recovery and climate targets.'

One participant asked how the strategy links to Oxford City Council's [Green Spaces Strategy](#).

Other less common themes from across all group discussions were:

- **Community assets (e.g. community centres)** – how to make best use of these and ensure they are accessible to all.
- **Young and older people involvement** – ensure that we engage with both young and older people for this strategy.
- **Leisure and physical activity** – make more mention of the importance of physical activity.
- **Cost of living crisis and affordability** – ensure that access to activities and facilities is affordable especially given the current climate.

- **Volunteering** – ensure that we are linked with the voluntary sector for delivery of this strategy as well as highlight volunteer opportunities for residents.
- **Inequality** – the need for the strategy to address growing inequality as well as the importance of completing Equality Impact Assessments (EIA). The EIA steering group in particular raised this point.
- **Mapping assets** – some participants suggested it would be useful to undertake an assets and partners mapping exercise.
- **Transparency** – ensure that we are transparent with communities about exactly what we are trying to achieve and why.
- **Barriers** – consider what the barriers to delivery might be and how we might overcome these.
- **Build Trust** – important to build trust with communities.

Recommendations

Below details recommendations for the structure, development and implementation of the Thriving Communities Strategy based on the identified themes above:

1. Structuring the strategy report

- ❖ **Terminology and jargon** – consider the terminology and jargon used. Not everyone will understand what is meant by specific terms or jargon. Ensure these are explained.
- ❖ **Language** – be mindful of those whose first language isn't English and consider having versions of the strategy in other languages to maximise engagement from all communities.
- ❖ **Length** – some participants felt that the discussion paper is too long. Consider creating a summary version of the final strategy.
- ❖ **Visuals** – the use of visuals in the discussion paper was generally well received. Use these where relevant in the final strategy paper.
- ❖ **Accessibility** – ensure that the final strategy paper is accessible to all and consider how the strategy will be disseminated so that it reaches everyone. Also important to think about those who may be digitally excluded and how to reach them.
- ❖ **Links to other relevant strategies** – ensure other relevant strategies are clearly linked to from within the TCS strategy.

2. What is missing?

- ❖ **Costs:** A breakdown of the actual costs for delivering the strategy and how it will be funded.
- ❖ **Green spaces:** A number of participants commented that the discussion paper does not make enough mention of access to green spaces and their link to mental and physical wellbeing.
- ❖ **Links to other strategies:** A few participants felt that having clear links to other related strategies within the TCS, and how they connect, would be useful.
- ❖ **Measuring outcomes:** Consider exactly how we will measure the success and impact of the strategy.
- ❖ **Examples:** Include examples/case studies of what success looks like.

- ❖ **Digital Inclusion:** Some felt the strategy should include plans for digital inclusion (the County have recently published a digital inclusion strategy).
- ❖ **Physical activity:** Some felt the importance of physical activity, and its link to mental wellbeing, needs more mention.
- ❖ **Volunteering:** Some felt we should mention volunteering opportunities across the city as well as ensure we engage with voluntary organisations for the delivery of this strategy.
- ❖ **Prioritisation exercise:** Consider undertaking a prioritisation exercise to understand what partners and communities feel are priorities. Important to understand this as they may differ.

3. Strategy ownership

- ❖ **Clear governance:** Who owns the strategy and is ultimately responsible for its delivery? Ideally have a strategy lead who has overall responsibility.
- ❖ **Communities, partners and service areas:** All have roles to play in the strategy delivery and our expectations of them need to be clear.

4. Community involvement and engagement

- ❖ **Community involvement:** Is crucial for understanding what communities need and value. Communities must be fully engaged for this strategy to be a success.
- ❖ **Inclusion and diversity:** All communities should to be included in the development and implementation of this strategy. Important that we are inclusive in our approach and that we listen to the many voices of Oxford's diverse communities.
- ❖ **Put people front and centre of the strategy:** When asked, more participants felt that 'people' is the most important of the 4Ps than any other (People, Place, Pride and Progress).
- ❖ **Listen to communities:** Demonstrate in the final strategy that we have listened to communities and that we will do this ongoing (and how). This helps to build trust.
- ❖ **Empower communities:** Detail how we will empower communities to make change themselves.

5. Partnership working and joining up strategies

- ❖ **Identify and work with partners:** Partnership working will be crucial to deliver this strategy and, just as importantly, we will need to work with partners to agree what their roles are in helping us to achieve the strategy's aims. A number of partners suggested ways in which they would like to support.
- ❖ **Aligning strategies:** Ensure that the TCS is aligned with other strategies where relevant, both internally and externally, to ensure consistency.

6. Implementing and delivering the strategy

- ❖ **Delivery plan:** Layout exactly how the plan is going to be delivered. Consider using an action/delivery plan.
- ❖ **Communication plan:** How will this strategy and its aims be communicated, not just to

communities throughout Oxford but to partners and service areas? Consider developing a communication plan.

- ❖ **What makes this strategy different:** A few participants felt that they had ‘heard it all before’ and that things don’t change. Highlight what will be different this time and how this will ensure that the strategy is a success. Demonstrate successes ongoing.

7. Measuring outcomes and success

- ❖ **Measuring success and impact:** Important to consider how the impact and success of the strategy is going to be measured. Think about ‘meaningful measurement’.
- ❖ **Data and insight:** Should be used ongoing to understand the impact of the strategy and if its aims are being achieved. Consider using both quantitative and qualitative data including case studies and story-telling.

8. Embedding the strategy

- ❖ **Adaptable and flexible:** Ensure that we are adaptable and flexible in implementing and embedding this strategy.
- ❖ **Continual learning:** The strategy’s principles shouldn't be set in stone; it important to be flexible and adapt if necessary. We should apply learnings and review as we go.



Summary of Findings by Strand

This section presents the findings of the thematic analysis by strand.

Thematic Analysis for Strand 1 discussions

Three group discussions were held for strand 1: The internal ODG group, the Internal Policy Officers group and the Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP) group. The OSP group included both councillors and officers.

The most common themes from strand 1 discussions were:

- Aligning strategies
- Ensuring that an action plan is created
- Using examples to embed the strategy
- Measuring outcomes
- Education and schools

Aligning Strategies

This was mentioned several times in the internal policy officers group; that is the need to ensure that the TCS strategy is aligned with other strategies to ensure duplication is avoided and that there is a joined up approach. Some participants also commented that strategies connected to the TCS are sign-posted to from within the TCS and that it should be

easy for people to understand how different strategies interconnect:

'Ensure action plans are aligned and not duplicated; Reference other external strategies (e.g. health, County) and demonstrate full integration; Identify people with specialist knowledge to read through strategies and pick out key links'

'Sign post to other strategies within the TCS'/ 'Make some form of infographic/mind map that shows how strategies connect'

Creating an Action Plan

The internal ODG group in particular highlighted the need for an action plan for strategy implementation to ensure that there is a clear plan for actually delivering the strategy. This links to the theme of 'delivering the strategy' seen in other strands.

'Could we create an action plan that's updated annually (similar to Housing?)'

'How is this being developed? Is this enough. What else do we need from our services?'

Use of Examples to Embed the Strategy

Some participants felt that using examples would be a good way of embedding the strategy and demonstrating its impact. Feedback also included how examples can show people what success looks like in practice and how they can adopt the strategy.

'Give concrete examples of what we want to do, what achieving a goal looks like'

'Understand how they (the principles) have been adopted by different service areas - use examples'

Measuring Outcomes

This theme was not only one of the key themes from strand 1, it was one of the most common themes overall. In strand 1 feedback related to measuring outcomes was often not to suggest how this should be done but to simply flag that it is important that we consider how we will measure the strategy's outcomes.

'How are we meeting the principles? Build in to SLAs'

'What outcomes are we looking to achieve?'

Education and Schools

The OSP group raised the need to recognise the impact of Covid on performance in schools, the need to make mention of school exclusions as well as how education can help to reduce inequality.

'Must throw in school exclusions – this is increasing issue...at risk of exploitation – needs to be collectively addressed'

'Post COVID – need to recognise that many Year 7 and Year 8 children are struggling with socialisation of being back in schools. Those doing better have supportive parents. Need to consider our role in supporting that as part of Thriving Communities'

Other interesting themes from strand 1, although not the most common, were:

1. The need to be **adaptable** – ensure that we are fluid in our approach and are able to review the strategy ongoing:

'Principles shouldn't be set in stone, need to be fluid and adapt - always learning, need to be reviewed'

2. Consider how we will actually **deliver the plan**. How will we do this given that the aims of the strategy are ambitious?

'Bold and ambitious values and aims – but very complex given the partner landscape. Needs to be real at the granular people level. What is the implementation gap?'

3. Ensure that we **communicate** the aims and principles of the strategy both internally and externally, with officers, partners and communities, to ensure they understand what the strategy is aiming to achieve and how:

'Culture change; Clear communication - show how things work in practice; Make work relevant to colleagues, communities and partners'

Conclusions for Strand 1 Discussions

Discussions from strand 1 were more focused on the practicalities of the strategy than other strands where there was more of a focus on community involvement and engagement.

Feedback that consideration is given to how the strategy is properly aligned with other strategies, that there is a clear action plan for delivery and how the strategy can be successfully embedded were among the most commonly mentioned themes.

Other considerations were also raised and the OSP group in particular also focused on education and volunteering. Whilst the Policy Officers groups made most mention of the practicalities (aligning strategies and measuring outcomes), some participants did talk about the need for a cultural change and being adaptable.

Thematic Analysis of Strand 2 discussions

Group discussions with internal and external groups. For strand 2 nineteen group discussions were held with partners and organisations from across Oxford as well as Oxford

City Council members, Oxfordshire County Council, the ODS (Oxford Direct Services) Exec Team and the EDI (Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion) Steering Group. A list of attendees at these sessions can be found at the beginning of this report.

Strand 2 group discussions had the highest number of participants of all the strands and as a result a higher number of themes were identified from these discussions. The most common themes from strand 2 discussions were:

- Community Engagement and Community Involvement
- Clarity
- Measuring Outcomes
- Delivering the strategy
- Partnership Working
- Communication
- Data and Insight
- Inclusion

Community Engagement and Community Involvement

This was the most common theme in strand 2 and was also the most common theme overall. This theme encompasses several sub-themes relating to:

1. **Listening to communities:** Ensure that we understand what they want and need.
2. **Collaboration:** Ensure that we have a collaborative approach to working with communities in order to deliver the strategy.
3. **Ownership:** Giving communities a say in the ownership and implementation of this strategy.
4. **Inclusivity:** Ensure that we reach all of Oxford's diverse communities, not just those who shout the loudest and encourage everyone to take part.
5. **Recognising and rewarding:** Recognise and reward members of the community for their involvement.

'Ensure we listen to communities and gain their 'buy in'. Empower and support them to be part of something longer term that they have ownership of and support sustainability'

'What we as professionals have to say is irrelevant. We need to be having grass roots conversations with our communities. They are the key to this strategy'

'If we are enabling the community to take on some of this, it's important to ensure the communities' time is recognised and utilising resources to reward those for being involved'

'How will we ensure further outreach to underrepresented communities?'

'Collaboration between community, institutions, partners and other organisations is key. We all have the same interests at heart and it makes sense for us to work together'.

Clarity

The need for clarity had several sub-themes:

1. The terminology used – for some the terminology was unclear or needed to be defined. For example what exactly do we mean by ‘thriving’ or ‘demonstrating impact’? Also feedback on avoiding the use of jargon - e.g. healthy place shaping, net zero etc.

‘What is the definition of ‘THRIVING’ - different views on this’

‘We need to define meaningful measurement. Meaningful measurement might not mean anything to a layperson’.

2. Some felt that the discussion paper is too wordy and long and there is a need to simplify the strategy so that it is easy to read and understand.

‘Paper is confusing for some - trickle feed the info rather than bulk dumping in one long report - for some this is a massive barrier’

‘The discussion paper is too complicated, communication needs to be simple and clear’

3. Clarity links to another fairly common theme of ‘language used’, namely that for some residents, possibly those whose first language isn’t English, there may be a language barrier and therefore clear, simple language is important. One participant asked what languages the strategy will be published in.

‘What languages has it been published in? Which people within the community have actually seen/read it? Those most vulnerable are being further isolated by the very nature of the information (too wordy, no visual learning aids, no audio etc.)’

4. One comment relating to clarity on the principles within the strategy and how these are going to be used.

‘One person asked what the principles are going to be used for. Are they a guide? Are they used to measure projects? Are staff going to be held accountable? Are they a criteria? Please can we have more information?’

Measuring Outcomes

This was one of the most common themes from the strand 2 conversations as well as one of the most common themes overall. As was the case in strand 1 conversations, strand 2 comments relating to measuring outcomes were often to simply flag that this needs to be considered rather than how to do this. Some felt how outcomes will be measured was missing from the discussion paper.

Several participants felt that measuring outcomes is how you demonstrate the impact of the strategy. A few participants also mentioned the need for ‘meaningful measure’.

'How can we track social impact that requires longer periods of monitoring so we can see true impact of this work?'

'Aims should be measurable - how will we know if we have achieved for example a vibrant economy?'

'A key aspect of meaningfully measuring impact is in reporting and properly communicating your successes and failures. Welcoming constructive feedback and incorporating that moving forward.'

Delivering the strategy

Several comments in strand 2 related to how the strategy is actually going to be delivered. Some commented on the need to be practical and to think about what is actually going to be achievable. A few commented on the fact that they have seen similar plans in the past and that nothing has really changed!

'Heard it all before. What are we really going to do about it?'

'I think the building on what's strong not what's wrong sort of works, but for me it's about focusing on what is achievable, rather than sending lots of time on things which are desirable but not viable'.

Related to the theme of delivering strategy was that of **governance** and in particular who is going to have overall responsibility for ensuring the strategy is actually delivered. Some felt that it is important that this strategy has a clear leader who will take the strategy forward and they felt that this is currently missing from the discussion paper.

'Champion to lead - Without a champion, direction can be lost'

'A 5th 'P', 'Power'. Who makes these decisions?'

'It's about how we work together, wrap around communications plan and accountable governance'.

Partnership Working

Partnership working was another main theme from strand 2. It includes a number of sub-themes:

1. The need to work with partners in order to deliver the strategy and achieve the best outcomes.
2. Ensure we think about which partners are needed for this strategy and what part they play in delivering this strategy. A number of comments mentioned the need to ensure we have strong links with the County
3. To take learnings from partners to inform the work that we do.
4. The need for collaboration – ensure that we collaborate effectively with our partners

(as well as communities).

'The Community Services Team can't do this alone - it requires collaboration as a collective County'

'By listening to other organisations and learning from them'

'Share info around new initiatives to get the right people involved & the best outcomes'

'Does it call enough on partners to do stuff? (the paper seems more abstract based rather than providing a real time approach of what will actually be implemented i.e. relevant tangible approach)'

Related to partnership working is the need to ensure we align strategies (both internal and external) and ensure cross strategy links are made where relevant. This also ensures consistency, avoids duplication and aids delivery.

'How do we join all of this up? There are strategies all over the place'.

'Discussed the need to align our plans with delivery partners'

'Share all information to ensure there is no duplication and work together where there is duplication or overlap'

'This is not just a stand-alone strategy - inter related to other strategies i.e. equality and diversity so the community are more interested in what OCC are actually going to do rather than what is contained within this document'.

Communication

A number of participants in strand 2 discussions raised the theme of 'communication' particularly in response to the question 'how can you work with us to achieve the 10 aims?'

Some commented that we need to ensure we communicate effectively with communities throughout the city so that they are fully informed as to what is on offer for them as well as what our plans are and what the aims of this strategy are.

Others felt it was about communicating effectively with our partners as well as internally to ensure we are 'joined up' in our approach and are fully aware of what each other is doing. A couple of participants mentioned the need for a communications' plan and some suggested how we could do this e.g. newsletters, sharing stories in videos, a shared system etc.

'Better ongoing communication needed - particularly post Covid which created huge isolation within some communities - what is the follow up?'

'We need a Communications plan and to join the dots and signpost – a centralised website?'

'A lot of work needs to be done to improve communication around service provision - this is something that partners can then distribute and pass on'

Data and Insight

This theme was often mentioned in relation to how we measure the impact of the strategy.

Some participants also suggested ways to do this with some feeling there should be a focus on qualitative feedback to measure the impact e.g. case studies, focus groups and people's stories. A few mentioned that there is data available but need to make better use of it.

'We are data rich but articulation is poor. How can we do this better?'

'Qualitative plus quantitative (Social Return on Investment for some aspects but also stories that talk about people's journeys)'

'Story telling - listening to lived experiences, picking key points/issues to work with'

Other themes to note from strand 2, although not the most common include:

Inclusion

A number of participants mentioned the importance of inclusion particularly in response to the question 'what have we missed'.

Some participants commented on the importance of ensuring that all communities are represented, others mentioned specific groups we need to consider such as faith groups, as well as residents who are blind or hearing impaired. Some also felt that in order to be inclusive and accessible we need to consider the format of the strategy document.

'Ensure you are targeting a diverse range of members of the community, not just those with the 'loudest' voice - this can be facilitated through organisations on the ground who work closely with and are active within the community as a whole'.

'Ensure communities of interest, geography and race etc. are all included. How do we ensure interconnectivity by connecting all of the various groups and rebuild relationships (i.e. the lack of trust from the community towards the council?)'

'Can we create a shorter, layman's version of the document to ensure accessibility and inclusivity?'

Funding and costs

Comments related to funding/access to funds were fairly broad. A number of comments related to accessing funds (and ensuring communities know how to do this) as well as the need to consider how the aims of the strategy will be funded. Some felt that funding for and costs associated with the strategy are missing from the discussion paper and should be included. Others commented on how restricted funding currently is and that this is a

concern.

'Funding (i.e. Government) criteria can be restrictive and no necessarily support reducing inequalities effectively'.

'Supporting communities to access funds and bids and making help and support available to do this and simplifying'

'From a property asset perspective, there is worry about the finances of the council and our partners. On reading the strategy, it appears that we have finance to be able to do things, that in reality, we may not. We need to be transparent and careful to not over promise and underperform'.

'What is missing – 'No reference to costs'.

Green spaces

Although not one of the most common themes, a number of participants mentioned 'green spaces' as something that the strategy is missing and how important these are as well as ensuring equal access to green spaces.

'Equity of access to green spaces - for those living in areas high on the indices of deprivation'

'Not much detail on green spaces. Some parts of Oxford are lacking in green space. Need to talk to communities about what they need.'

Adaptable

And finally a few comments related to the need for this strategy to be adaptable. Some participants feel we need to be able to adapt the strategy as circumstances change and that it should not be set in stone.

'Need for flexibility. Adapt for change. Be agile. Cost of living having an impact on so many areas, working behaviour, what we spend on'.

Conclusions for Strand 2 discussions

Themes from strand 2 conversations were wide ranging which is not surprising given the number of participants and conversations that took place.

Feedback from strand 2 often focused on community involvement and engagement and how important this is, not only to ensure that the focus of the strategy is right but to ensure its implementation and success. Participants felt it is important that everyone is listened to, not just those who may have the loudest voice.

This concern for community involvement and engagement is woven through a number of

other themes, for example the need for clarity so that the strategy can be understood by all and is as inclusive as possible, the importance of communication so that communities are kept informed and know exactly what our plans are and that levels of community involvement should be a key measure of the success of the strategy.

And finally a number of participants in the strand 2 conversations were focused on how we plan to actually deliver the strategy and what its governance will be, and in particular the importance of having an overall lead who will ultimately be responsible for ensuring the implementation and success of this strategy.

Thematic Analysis of Strand 3 discussions

Group discussions with external groups. Discussions in this strand included a wide range of people. A number of these discussions took place in person during community events such as the Cutteslowe Play Day, the West Oxford Fun day event, the Northway summer holidays' activities programme and the Eid Extravaganza as well as with the Lived Experience Advisory Forum. This strand served the same purpose as strand 2 with locality based inclusive conversations that involved community based stakeholders who may not have or been able to participate in strand 2 or may have requested a bespoke conversation. Please note that a number of strand 2 participants were asked if they would like to have a strand 3 conversation but they preferred to take part in a strand 2 discussion as it enabled them to network with other groups and organisations.

Asylum Welcome also provided a report detailing conversations they had with refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants so that their feedback can also be considered for in the final strategy (see [page 27](#) for further details).

The most common themes from the five group discussions were:

- Community involvement and engagement
- Inclusion
- Community safety
- Young people and children involvement

Community Involvement and Engagement

The most common theme again was community involvement and engagement, particularly in response to what success looks like and how we measure it. Participants felt that attendance of residents at community events is one way of measuring the success of this strategy and that events can be an important way of bringing people together and strengthening a sense of community.

'Events are important because it's a way of getting people out in the community and encourages them to take part in something. This strengthens the community by bringing people together. Free refreshment stands in the community is important because not everyone has access to money to buy simple luxuries when outside'.

Inclusion

Inclusion was the second most commonly mentioned theme in strand 3 discussions and was mentioned in four of the five strand 3 discussion groups. In particular participants mentioned the need to ensure that those residents whose first language isn't English are included and can access information and understand what is going on in their community. One participant commented that inclusion and diversity is foundational to making communities work:

'Inclusion and diversity needs to come first as this is foundation of making communities work'

'Those not connected with their community or speak English to know what is going on in their community'

Community Safety

This theme was only mentioned in the LEAF group but was one of the most common themes in that group. This relates to both policing and sufficient street lighting as well as the need for safe places for people to go (such as community centres).

'More community centres and safe places' 'What is missing - neighbourhood policing'

Children and Young People Involvement

At both the Cutteslowe Play Day and the Eid Extravaganza the need for 'youth provision' was mentioned:

'Youth provisions should be included and be invested in for future generations'

'Youth provision needs to be more accessible and based in bus routes, so young people can have access to it. Since the 17 bus was cut this has had a huge effect on us and the children accessing services'

Other themes (although only mentioned by a few and not the most common) included:

Cost of living/affordability – a few comments related to how consideration needs to be given to making activities and facilities affordable for families and residents.

'Community activities and facilities need to be affordable for families'

Community Assets – a couple of comments related to the use of community assets and in particular having places where people can meet and connect.

'Having places where people can meet and connect, cafes, fetes etc'

The WOCA group only were also asked what they think makes a thriving community. A range of answers were given as detailed below:



Community Support

Additionally in three of the groups (Eid Extravaganza, Cutteslowe Play Day and the Children and Young People group) participants were asked which of the 4Ps detailed in the discussion paper (People, Pride, Place, Progress) they believe is most important. The 4Ps framework is detailed below.

- ❖ **People** – implementing our Thriving Communities principles – e.g. doing things with people not to them, and building on what works well
- ❖ **Pride** – celebrating diverse cultural heritage, encouraging trust and belonging and ensuring inclusivity
- ❖ **Place** – inclusive spaces and places
- ❖ **Progress** – we will use a range of ways to demonstrate the impact of our work and continually learn.

The results were:



Whilst results are not exactly the same across each group, all three groups clearly felt that 'People' is an important aspect of the framework. Conversely Progress was considered the least important and in two groups no-one felt this was the most important of the 4Ps.

In the Children and Young People's group* participants were also asked to put a sticker against various statements under each of the 4Ps to denote which they felt is the most important and why.

Results are below:

People - 14 stickers in total

Grants and Funding: 2 stickers

- *You can fund opportunities for vulnerable children with life threatening illnesses.*
- *Because it gives families a better chance to afford things*

Volunteering: 1 sticker

- *Because it allows people to share their ideas and get involved.*

Events: 2 stickers

- *It allows people to have fun*
- *Brings lots of people together*

COVID-19 recovery: 1 sticker

- *So people can go back to work and make money for the community*

Programmes: 1 sticker

- *Because we need a way to achieve and enjoy during the holidays*

Activities: 1 sticker

- *So that all people have something to do*

Listening and responding to communities: 1 sticker

- *I think the council should listen to what people have to say so that people don't have to do it all themselves*

Skills: 1 sticker

- *Having more skills = increased access to more jobs and more activities*

Accessible fees and charges: 4 stickers

- *If things were cheaper to access it would help as other prices have been raised which means things like expensive transport to things like school or things for me, sometimes I don't have access to cars so it is very inconvenient to be paying so much.*
- *Transportation costs to help get to work and things I want to do without too much of cost difference.*
- *Bus prices are high and kids need to go to school every day, so things like gym prices should reduce as they are trying to promote healthy lifestyles*
- *Because people should be able to go out and still be able to afford food.*

Pride: 11 stickers in total

Diversity: 5 stickers

- *To show inclusion of all within community*
- *Because as a biracial person it's important to embrace diversity*

- *It's like teamwork, because teamwork makes the dream work*
- *Because I am against racism*
- *Celebrating diversity can help stop racism*

Inclusion: 4 stickers

- *It is Important to make sure that people with disabilities are included*
- *It is important to help people with life threatening illnesses*
- *Because all people should be included and treated fairly*
- *So that everyone is included*

Heritage: 1 sticker

- *My heritage is important to me*
- *To have pride we need to show how diverse somewhere is*

Cohesion: 1 sticker

- *Social cohesion will help bring society together despite differences to solve problems and include those with or without differences.*

Place: 7 stickers in total

Access to facilities: 1 sticker

- *So we can come to youth club to play pool and PS4*

Facility assets: 2 stickers

- *So that we can really enjoy the time we spend here*
- *To give us new experiences and new things to do*

Reducing carbon: 2 stickers

- *Because of pollution the whole world is struggling, we need to stop it before it's too late*
- *We should have solar panels in every community centre, people are constantly using the centres and therefore the electricity being used is increased*

Design of facilities: 2 stickers

- *To help maintain facilities so that they may last longer*
- *To attract more people*

Progress: 1 sticker in total

Future scoping: 1 sticker

- *So that you can make a significant change to make the world better for people*

Do we have the right outcome statements?

In two groups (Eid Extravaganza and Children and Young People group) participants were also asked to feedback if they think we have the right outcome statements in the

discussion paper (NB feedback was not obtained on the progress outcome statement):

Outcome Statements:

People

“A more equitable and supportive society is needed – COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis have further increased inequalities.”

- A majority felt we have got this right. Some participants fed back that they would like to see specifics on supporting communities regarding social and economic barriers and some commented that they word equitable could be confusing. Some participants did not understand what is meant by ‘cost of living’.

Pride

“We want everyone in Oxford to feel a sense of local pride, be free to be who they are and to feel like they belong”

- A majority feel we have got this outcome statement right. One comment related to making locals feel like we are on their side and not just concerned with the students who bring in money to the universities.

Place

“The Council has a crucial role in creating community spaces that help people thrive, from parks and public spaces, through to community & leisure centres”

- About half of participants felt we have got this right. Some commented that more information is needed on what's on offer for them, specifically those with no recourse to public funds (NRFPF) and those who have language barriers.

Asylum Welcome report

As part of these strand 3 conversations, Asylum Welcome were also asked to consult with refugees, asylum seekers and vulnerable migrants living in Oxford to ensure that their needs and experiences as residents of Oxford are understood and included in the Thriving Communities Strategy. A report detailing their feedback and key findings can be found [here](#).

Conclusions for Strand 3 discussions

Group discussions from this strand were slightly difference to the other strands in that a number of them took place in person during community events such as the Cutteslowe Play Day and the Eid Extravaganza. As a result participants were asked to participate in a number of interactive exercises such as putting stickers against which of the 4Ps they felt was most important.

Similar to feedback from stand 2, participants were often focused on the need to ensure community involvement and engagement and were also concerned that the strategy is as inclusive as possible.

With such a focus on community involvement and engagement it is perhaps not surprising that most people across the strand 3 groups felt that 'people' is the most important of the 4Ps.

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