

Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny
Pathway Document/ Timetable prepared by the Task Group

What was the remit of the Task Group?

The Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee has had the topic of the Oxfordshire Partnership (and its main outputs the Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement) included in its work programme for some time. At its October meeting the Committee appointed a Task Group to investigate the topic and report back in order to inform a 'select committee style' session. This briefing paper sets out their proposal for that select committee.

Why scrutinise?

Partnership working is becoming ever more central to the provision of local services. The Partnership's activities must be accessible by the public, and accountable to them.

A primary duty of Scrutiny members is to ensure the Council [and its partners] achieve a real step change in delivery ~ i.e. that tangible benefits materialise from the resources given over to Partnership working.

What is involved?

The Scrutiny Councillors will canvas a wide range of views and collect background evidence to help them assess the health of local Partnership working. As well as bringing awareness of the Partnership's activities to a wider audience, they aim to identify what people think are the ingredients required for success and assess to what extent they are present in Oxfordshire.

All the evidence that is amassed will be examined and a report including recommendations will be sent to the Cabinet and the Oxfordshire Partnership Board. It will focus on what makes a positive difference for delivering a Sustainable Community Strategy with achievable Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets.

What are the objectives?

The task group have identified some core objectives from its principal aim of *discovering how partnership working actually works and exploring the process* – i.e. to:

- take stock of where we are now in terms of partnership development – a snapshot at this moment in time – and assess its strengths and weaknesses
- learn where partners would like to get to and what are the possibilities and challenges for moving forward
- find out what are the obstacles and threats to that vision
- establish who is involved and what their motivation for involvement is – testing commitment and engagement to see if there is real 'buy-in'
- determine if there is true collective ownership of targets or are they viewed as part of a centrally imposed government initiative
- comment on whether or not it is a 'partnership of equals'
- evaluate what impact the Partnership is having on what agencies do
- explore accountability for the LAA, with a view to informing any changes during 2007 for greater scrutiny involvement.

How will it be done?

The primary evidence gathering will take place at a special 'select committee style' meeting of Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee on **27 March 2007**. The meeting will be led by the Chairman of the Committee and divided into a morning session, which will focus on general strategic issues, and an afternoon session looking at two case studies in more detail.

A) Morning session (10am-12:30pm)

Members' Briefing: 10-10:30am

A 30 minute briefing by the task group will outline how the Oxfordshire Partnership works and explain some of the key concepts. This will bring Members up to speed with what the task group has discovered and help clarify any issues before witnesses arrive. It will also set out how the rest of the day will work and what outcomes are sought from this piece of Scrutiny work.

Individual interviews: 10:30-12pm

Six leaders from some of the key organisations across the different sectors involved in the Oxfordshire Partnership will be asked for their views. They are:

- Cllr Keith Mitchell (Leader, Oxfordshire County Council)
- Derek Holmes (Editor, Oxford Times)
- Shaun Morley (Chief Superintendent, Thames Valley Police)
- Andrea Young (Chief Executive, Oxfordshire PCT)
- Linda Watson (Chief Executive, Oxfordshire Rural Community Council)
- Bishop Colin Fletcher (Voluntary, Community & faith sector representative)

Scripted lines of inquiry will be produced and sent to witnesses in advance to help them prepare. Members of the Task Group will put these questions to the individuals, who will be interviewed in six separate 15 minutes slots. Written submissions from those parties not able to speak on this day will also be requested and circulated to the Committee. All those attending the day will be invited to write their comments on yellow 'Post-it' notes, which will be collected as additional evidence.

Round-table discussion: 12-12:30pm

At the end of the individual short interviews, all six 'witnesses' will come together for a collective discussion in which they will be able to comment on points raised by each other previously. Questions during this session will be put by the Chairman in a 'Question Time' format. During the meeting Members of the Committee are asked to write any questions they have for the witnesses on pink 'Post-it' notes, which will be collected at 11:45am and given to the Chairman to inform her questioning.

B) Afternoon session (1:30 to 4pm)

The focus will be to unpick two particular LAA targets, talk to those who deliver against them, and gain further information/evidence to ground the more abstract ideas articulated during the morning in real experience. The Committee will need to look for coherence/divergence with the views expressed by the leaders with ultimate responsibility. The sessions will explore the objective in general and not just look at the PIs used to measure achievement of that objective.

Increasing participation of adults in physical exercise: 1:30-2:30pm

The first case study will look at the issues around LAA target HCOP5 – increasing participation of adults in physical exercise. The precise witness list has yet to be finalised but the intention is to invite a cross section of four or five workers closely involved in the delivery of services and speak to them collectively. They will be sent a list of questions in advance and all Members of the Committee will participate in asking them. Suggested witnesses include:

- Marian Pocock – Community Development Officer, Age Concern Oxfordshire
- Chris Freeman – Managing Director, Oxfordshire Sports Partnership
- Nick Welch – Head of Service, Planning and Partnerships for Social and Community Services, Oxfordshire County Council
- Jackie Wilderspin – Senior Public Health Manager, Oxfordshire PCT
- A District Council officer– to be identified

Educational achievement of children: 2:30-3:30pm

The second case study will look at the issues around LAA target CYP1&2 – educational achievement of children. It will follow the same round-table discussion format with appropriate questions from the councillors:

- Cynthia Bartlett – Headteacher, Bicester Community College (former OSSHTA Chair and Children & Young People's Partnership member)
- David Jones – Headteacher Gosford Hill School (Kidlington) (current OSSHTA Chair)
- Lesley Barter – Oxfordshire Education Business Partnership
- Venetia Mayman – Secondary Strategy Manager (CYP&F), Oxfordshire County Council
- A representative – Thames Valley Police OR Mike Simm, Youth Offending Service
- Dr John Shaw – Consultant Community Paediatrician, Oxfordshire Radcliffe Hospitals Trust

'Wash-up' session: 3:30pm - 4pm

This will be a chance for the Committee to reflect on what they have heard and express their views concerning that evidence. This will inform the direction of the draft Scrutiny Report, which the Task Group will undertake to put together on behalf of the Committee.

TASK GROUP

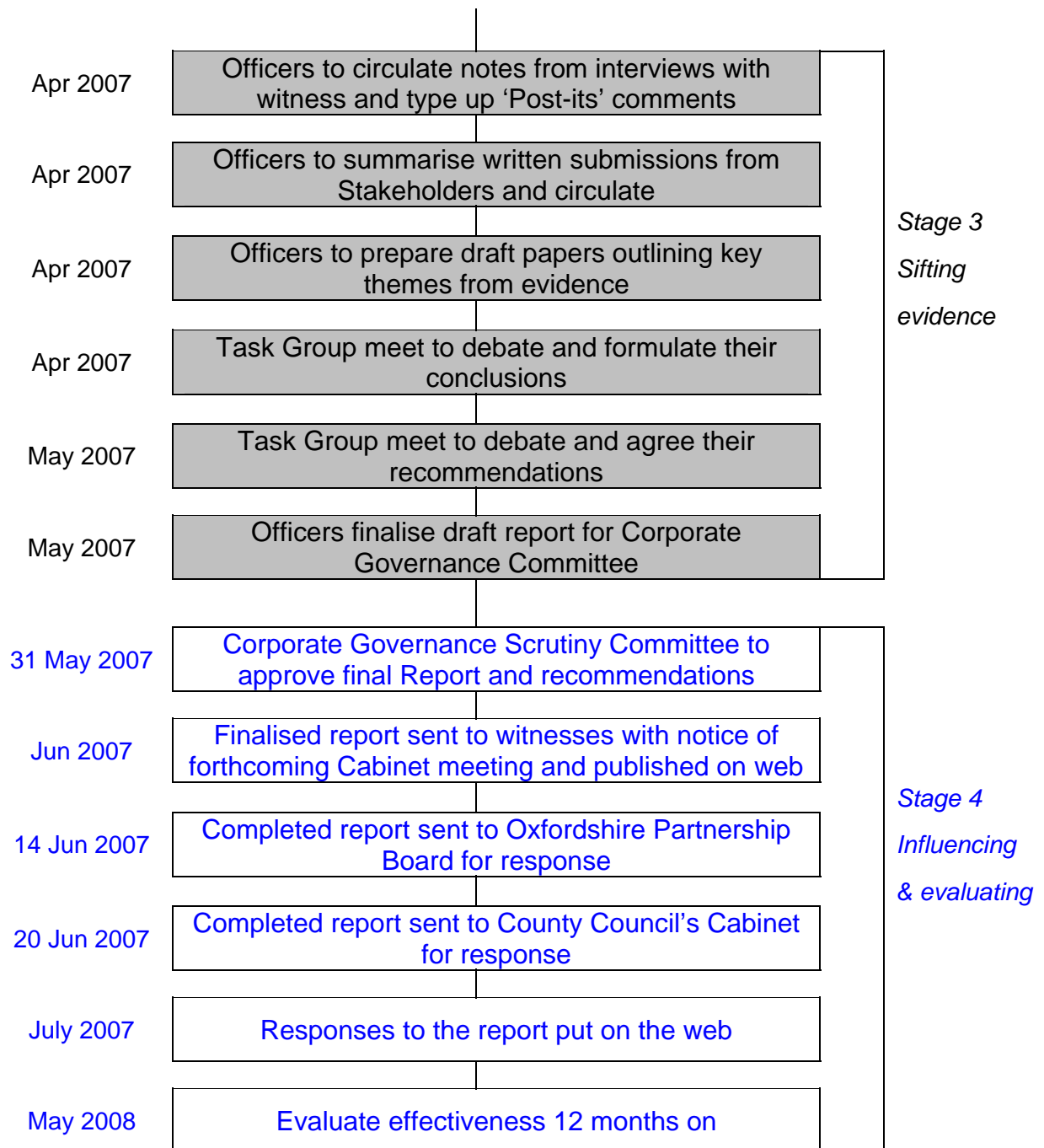
Cllr. Brighthouse
Cllr. Bryden
Cllr. Wilmshurst





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When will things take place?

12 Jan 2006	Corporate Governance consider LAA and offer advice to Cabinet	<i>Stage 1 Project Planning</i>
02 Mar 2006	Partnership/ Community Strategy/ LAA topic put into work programme by Members	
05 Oct 2006	Task Group membership agreed	
11 Oct 2006	Scrutiny Review Officer meets with Partnership Unit for background information	
12 Dec 2006	Task group meet to agree initial project plan	
11 Jan 2007	Task group meet to clarify understanding, refine objectives and agree morning witnesses	
12–31 Jan 2007	Witnesses for morning session invited/ confirmed, and Corporate Governance Chairman briefed	
24 Jan 2007	Task group meet to agree media strategy, fine tune arrangements and agree afternoon case-studies	
07 Feb 2007	Task group meet to prepare key lines of inquiry, and prepare briefing material for Corporate Governance	
20 Feb 2007	Task group meet to finalise stage management and brief Corporate Governance Chairman	
Feb 2007	Select committee style event publicised on web, in 'Inside' magazine, and local media (press release)	<i>Stage 2 Gathering Evidence</i>
Feb 2007	Officers collect background comparative data on case-study targets, research 'Pathfinders', etc.	
Feb 2007	Officers call for written submissions from interested parties and assemble further background docs	
Feb 2007	Witnesses for afternoon session invited/ confirmed, key lines of inquiry finalised	
01 Mar 2007	Task Group and Chief Executive attend Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee to brief Members	
27 Mar 2007	Public 'select committee style' meeting for Corporate Governance to question witnesses	
13 Apr 2007	Deadline for written submissions from stakeholders	



-  = Stage 1 Project Planning
-  = Stage 2 Gathering evidence
-  = Stage 3 Sifting evidence
-  = Stage 4 Disseminating & Evaluating