



**Engaging with  
Partnerships  
-Oxfordshire Partnership  
and  
County Council**



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# The Aims of the session

- To develop ideas about how elected members can become more engaged and involved with partnerships – and how partnerships can do more to engage and involve elected members.
- To raise elected members awareness of the purpose and potential value of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement and to discuss the draft Oxfordshire 2030 plan.
- To provide councillors with ideas about how they can evaluate the performance of partnerships.
- To facilitate future involvement and better communication between elected members and the Oxfordshire Partnership.

# Definition

“Partnership means many things to many people. Indeed it is often not clearly defined precisely because its ambiguity can be politically attractive.”

“It is difficult to be opposed to Partnerships.”

“There is no single easily transferable model of partnership.”

Roberts, LGMB, 1995

# Local government's distinctive leadership role within partnerships

*“ The days of the all-purpose (local) government are gone. They are finished. It is in partnership with others- public agencies, private companies, community groups and voluntary organisations- that local governments future lies. Local authorities will deliver some services but their distinctive leadership role will be to weave and knit together the contribution of the various local stakeholders.” (Blair, 1998)*

# Why we need Partnerships

- ❑ Partnership lies at the heart of much thinking about public policy and management – perceived as a solution to many (all?) problems.
- ❑ Overcoming a history of isolation and individualism by public service agencies – excessively inward-looking bureaucracies.
- ❑ An increasingly complex and confusing web of public service planners, providers, regulators – and funding.
- ❑ Statutory requirements and guidance – a multiplicity of partnerships, strategies and plans.
- ❑ Common sense – its obvious we must work together.

# What are partnerships designed to do?

- Share responsibility and improve accountability
- Join-up agendas across groups/organisations, balancing individual goals with collective interest
- Respond to local need/ meet consumer demands
- Raise awareness of the work being undertaken by different groups to avoid duplication and share resources

# Why Partnerships – the Wicked Issues (1)

## The floods of 2007

- The largest peacetime emergency since World War II
- The Pitt Review – reported June 2008
- **92** recommendations
- At least **52** of the recommendations directly or indirectly involve multi-agency co-ordination, co-operation, collaboration or partnership working.

# Wicked Issues (2): Crime and Disorder

- This is one of the 'commonsensical' issues that need a partnership solution
- Is there anyone present who would seriously argue that crime and disorder can be effectively dealt with by any one agency?
- Is there anyone who would argue that a new single agency could be created to deal with all aspects of crime and disorder?

# Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships

Revised Statutory requirements

Home Office guidance is very extensive.

Based on ‘the Hallmarks of Effective Partnerships’:

- ❑ Empowered and effective leadership
- ❑ Intelligence-led business processes
- ❑ Effective and responsive delivery structures
- ❑ Engaged communities
- ❑ Visible and constructive accountability
- ❑ Appropriate skills and knowledge

# Local Strategic Partnerships - role

Statutory Guidance (July 2008 – 56 pages!) says:

- ❑ Exercise a leadership and governing role
- ❑ Have oversight of and coordinate community consultation and engagement
- ❑ Produce a Sustainable Community Strategy
- ❑ Produce a county/unitary-wide Local Area Agreement
- ❑ Have oversight of the planning and alignment of resources
- ❑ Review and performance manage progress

# Partnership Life Cycles – just like teams they need time to develop

- **Forming** – early enthusiasm, exploratory
- **Frustration** – tension, hidden agendas
- **(Failing)** – disengagement, breakdown
- **Functioning** – focused, clear roles
- **Flying** – achieving goals, trust, shared leadership

(lgpartnerships.com)

# Partnership – types of partners

- **Enthusiasts** – see partnership as a wonderful opportunity to develop new approaches
- **Activists** – see value of partnership in overcoming fragmentation but concerned to ensure accountability
- **Pragmatists** – view partnership as necessary part of funding environment – adopt instrumental approach
- **Opponents** – see partnership as attack on local democracy – tolerate rather than support.

(Sullivan)

# First official doubts ? – Audit Com.

Publication: Governing partnerships – bridging the accountability gap (October 2005):

- ❑ Failure to assess costs and benefits
- ❑ Weaknesses in risk management
- ❑ Weaknesses in performance management
- ❑ Need to ensure public accountability
- ❑ Levers for improved governance

# 8 levers for improved governance

- Clarity to partner roles and responsibilities
- Stronger internal audit and external scrutiny
- More communication with public about role
- Better collaboration between national regulators
- Joined up inspection of multi-agency delivery
- Audit Commission support to secure improvement by those orgs. Then audit and inspect
- Joined up complaints investigation by Ombudsman
- Adopt Audit Commission and other advice – e.g. Improvement Network –  
([www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk](http://www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk))

# Evaluation of LSPs – for ODPM (2006)

- Governance issues:
  - Strategic leadership
  - Partnership and plan rationalisation
  - Accountability
  - Performance management
  - Capacity (structures/processes/conflict resolution/national and local focus)
  - Engaging stakeholders (Councillors? Private sector?)

# Evaluation frameworks (1) - Sullivan

Partnership 'fitness for purpose':

- Context
- Capacity
- Implementation
- Review and learning

# Evaluation frameworks (2) - Ignto

Smarter Partnerships: Skills and knowledge for:

- Leadership
- Trust
- Learning
- Managing for performance

[www.lgpartnerships.com](http://www.lgpartnerships.com)

## Evaluation frameworks (3) – ODPM (2005)

LSPs: Shaping their future – a consultation paper (December 2005):

- Changing policy context
- Role
- Accountability
- Governance
- Capacity to deliver

## Evaluation frameworks (4) – Audit Commission

See handout in your pack for details.

Questions to ask about specific partnerships:

- ❑ Rationale for the partnership
- ❑ Added value from the partnership
- ❑ Governance arrangements
- ❑ Performance management
- ❑ Financial management
- ❑ Risk management
- ❑ Termination arrangements
- ❑ Serving the Public

# Partnership and Public Participation (Lowndes and Sullivan (2004))

- Double helping of motherhood and apple pie?
- A bonus score in buzzword bingo?
  
- A new corporatism
- Confused identity, uncertain legitimacy
- A need to design participative partnerships

# Sustainable Community Strategies – a brief word:

## How do you evaluate a Community Strategy?

- Has the CS added value?
- Is the CS an effective mechanism to deliver central government objectives? (And local government objectives? And local community objectives?)
- Is the CS underpinned by robust systems of performance management?
- What processes are used to implement the CS?  
Are they effective?

# Community Strategies – cont'd

- What systems of partnership, involvement and accountability have been developed for the CS?
- How does the Community Strategy operate at different geographical levels – and different levels of local government.
- How does the CS mainstream other policies?

# Engaging and involving councillors

- ❑ Executive members primarily involved on LSP Boards.
- ❑ Other councillors may be involved in supporting partnerships.
- ❑ Direct councillor involvement at local level in helping consultation/development/communication of Community Strategies.
- ❑ Overview and Scrutiny reviews – of partnership working generally or of individual partnerships