

How does it work?



(i) The Oxfordshire Partnership Board

New governance arrangements for the Oxfordshire Partnership came into effect in January 2007, which replace the old OCP Strategy Group with a new Oxfordshire Partnership Board, the chairing of which now rotates on a two year cycle across the sectors, starting with Cllr Keith Mitchell. It meets three times per year.

The job of the Oxfordshire Partnership Board is to set the strategic vision for the county – a single overarching strategic plan for Oxfordshire – and articulate this in a Sustainable Community Strategy (which effectively replaces the old OCP Community Strategy) and will likely be called “Oxfordshire 2020”.

(ii) The Public Service Board

Historically, the OCP had limited opportunity to discuss the LAA and so established the Public Service Board to oversee its development. The newly named Oxfordshire Public Service Board is responsible for the delivery of the LAA and oversees performance in meeting the LAA targets. The Oxfordshire Public Service Board is currently chaired by the County Council (Cllr David Robertson).

(iii) The Local Area Agreement

The LAA 2006/09 is a negotiated agreement between central government and the Oxfordshire Partnership (brokered by Oxfordshire County Council). It contains about 35 targets that the partnership wants to hit. Amongst these are twelve ‘stretch’ targets, which attract a total of £16.6m in Performance Reward Grant if met. In effect, the LAA is the delivery plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy.

It is often described as an opportunity for the area to have a ‘single conversation with government’.

“A primary duty of Scrutiny members is to ensure the Council [and its partners] delivers on its key targets within the LAA.”

Local Area Agreements Research Report No.2 CfPS, Jun '06, p.11

Why Scrutinise it?

The government expect that the Oxfordshire Partnership’s activities are accessible by, and accountable to, the public. Further proposals will be developed in 2007 to set out how best to scrutinise the work of the partnership and the performance of the LAA. Today’s event will inform that debate.

What challenges does the Partnership face?

- Ensuring buy-in — how to get commitment?
- Being clear about what should happen in the future if the Partnership is to make effective changes ~ what would success look like to you?
- Ensuring all the expended effort and resources deliver significant changes to local services [i.e. real outcomes]. The last incarnation did not achieve a real step change in delivery.
- Ensuring the Sustainable Community Strategy becomes central to each organisation’s activity and not something peripheral that’s added-on.
- Ensuring the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA are addressing real local needs and are not simply overtaken by the government’s agenda.
- Ensuring more services can be delivered with preventative elements so that services are not always fire-fighting but actually help people to help themselves before problems arise.

Scrutinising the Oxfordshire Partnership



What is the Oxfordshire Partnership?

It is a statutory requirement for both county and district councils to enter into a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) with their partner bodies in the local area.

The county’s version is now called the Oxfordshire Partnership, formerly known as the Oxfordshire Community Partnership (OCP) – i.e. it is the entity made up by all the partners.

As an example, think about the person who complains about anti-social behaviour and vandalism in their street. She calls the County Council who advise her that this is a police matter. She calls the police and they refer her to the district council's Community Safety Officer who informs her that they don't have the powers to do anything unless it can be proven that there has been an infringement of the law...

...You get the picture.

Now imagine instead, that there is one phone number to call in the county to report any anti-social behaviour incidents and that the police, county, district councils, the youth offending team and drugs and alcohol action team all have a co-ordinated multi-agency response to solving problems in neighbourhoods...

...That's the Partnership at its best.

Why should I care?

As local councillors you can probably think of many more examples — such as flooding, drug use, waste management, ill health — and all the other things people contact you about.

The Partnership relates strongly to what Councillors already do in acting as a conduit to create seamless services for citizens. Partnership work builds on this important community role and extrapolates from it.

This Scrutiny event is about you holding up a mirror to the Partnership before the SCS is written and before a new LAA is drawn up.

Why does it matter?

The Local Government White Paper 2006 requires that the vision developed by the Partnership becomes central to the workings of the county council. Having an effective, well run Oxfordshire Partnership:

- builds cooperative relationships that stimulate joined-up working to create seamless services for local people
- attracts funding to area-based targets
- ensures better inspection ratings, which in future will be area-based, i.e. we will be affected by what other organisations do or fail to do

There is a myriad of partnership work going on all the time. The Oxfordshire Partnership offers an opportunity to streamline and coordinate this into something more manageable, more readily overseen and better focussed on local needs.

For more information

Scrutiny

Oxfordshire County Council

County Hall

1 New Rd, Oxford OX1 1ND

Phone: 01865 810822

Email: matt.bramall@oxfordshire.gov.uk

What is the Oxfordshire Partnership governance framework?

