

Better Governance and Accountability Oxfordshire Partnership Governance Review

Proposals for the structure of partnerships

1 Background to the partnership structure proposals

A group, led by Mary Harpley (Chief Executive, Cherwell District Council) and David Neudegg (Chief Executive, West Oxfordshire District Council) and supported by Paul James (Oxfordshire County Council), Val Johnson (Oxford City Council) and other district council officers, undertook an audit of existing partnerships and their governance between March and July 2008. The purpose of this review was to:

- rationalise partnerships to avoid unnecessary and unproductive meetings,
- clarify member roles and officer support arrangements,
- clarify the relationships and accountability between partnerships.

Their initial findings were reported to the Public Service Board in September 2008. The Board instructed the group to consult further with partnerships and to make recommendations to the Public Service Board on 18 February 2009.

2 Outcome of the meeting 18 February 2009

The Board received a report on the review of governance at the meeting and there was general agreement for the proposed structure. Some concern was noted over the need to maintain the effective work of the Housing and Waste Partnerships within the new thematic partnership structure.

It was resolved to:

- *Agree the proposed structure.*
- *Receive a further report in April 2009 setting out principles of governance, decision making and membership (including the role of elected members).*
- *Receive a further report in June 2009 clarifying the partnership governance and reporting structure for:*
Housing and homelessness
Supporting People
Environment and waste.

3 What happens now?

The report anticipated in April was deferred to June and the June meeting of the Public Service Board subsequently deferred to 06 July 2009. In the meantime discussions have been taking place at Local Authority Leaders meetings to ensure that all the districts participate in decisions relating to future changes for the structure and membership of thematic partnerships and the PSB. The PSB are expecting members of the Health & Well-Being Partnership and the Supporting People Commissioning Body to have agreed the nature of their working relationship within the newly proposed structure in readiness for the July PSB meeting.

The Supporting People Commissioning Body meet on Wed 17 June 2009 to discuss the arrangements it would like to see established to ensure it can deliver:

- successful implementation of the Supporting People plan/ agenda;
- involvement of elected members in critical Supporting People decisions;
- sufficient officer involvement in Supporting People to ensure it can implement plans and strategies;
- periodic progress reports to the HWBP on performance against its targets;
- a raised profile and an increased understanding of housing-related issues for vulnerable groups at a strategic level across partnerships and organisations.

Previous HWBP discussions suggest the Board are happy for Supporting People to carry on as at present, with the proviso that Supporting People continues to plan for change and rationalises the decision-making and delivery process wherever that is helpful to the outcomes it is setting out to achieve.