

CABINET - 20 JUNE 2007
EXAMINATION OF THE OXFORDSHIRE PARTNERSHIP AND LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT – SCRUTINY REVIEW
Response from The Leader of the Council

Annex 2

Set out below are the twelve recommendations from this Scrutiny Review with my response to each.

| No | Recommendations | Leader of the Council's Response |
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| 1 (a) | Set up a working group with Scrutiny members to develop a proposal by March 2008 at the latest for future Scrutiny arrangements of the Partnership. | I am happy to meet with the Scrutiny Task Group, the Chairman of the Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee and the Deputy Leader of the Council to develop a proposal although I think an earlier deadline might be more realistic and suggest 30 September 2007. |
| 1 (b) | Invite the Task Group to develop options/ proposals for consideration by the Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee in September 2007 if possible. | Agreed. |
| 2 (a) | Address the perceived democratic deficit by considering how the full Council on 6 November 2007 could hold a debate on several of the various issues raised by Partnership working so as to identify some key steps councillors should take to engage more fully with the LSP. | I do not disagree with this, but suggest the Political Groups be invited to consider how this could be made to work effectively. |
| 2 (b) | How individual Cabinet members could report back and be questioned by full Council on their activities in the themed partnership areas. | This could become a standing item on the Council agenda and there could be negotiations around the most appropriate Cabinet members to report to each Council with the ultimate decision taken by the Leader of the Council. |
| 3 | Consider if the way the County Council is structured suits delivery of an integrated Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement. | This is an interesting idea. Perhaps the Scrutiny Committee should decide whether it wishes to pursue this line of inquiry? |
| 4 | Identify a suitable private sector representative from a large business/ chamber of commerce to join the Partnership Board. Suggestions included: the Chairman of the Institute of Directors (Oxfordshire Branch) and the Chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses (Oxfordshire Branch). Members were also invited to forward any other suggestions to the Task Group or Scrutiny Review team. | The following have agreed to serve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nick Merry (Oxford United Chairman); • Elizabeth Sale (Thames Water and Oxfordshire Chamber of Commerce); • Miranda Markham (Bicester Village) |

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| 5 | Look at the delivery chains which support each of the LAA targets and build on any lessons learnt to strengthen their links. | I expect this work to be part of the Public Service Board's remit in monitoring delivery of the LAA targets. |
| 6 | Ensure someone is tasked with conducting an audit of all the different partnerships, noting which are inside and outside the LSP, and maintaining the resulting information. | The Oxfordshire Economic Partnership has already started on this task with a small Task Group of which I am a member. I am hopeful that this will lead to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A complete map of Oxfordshire partnerships (or as complete as will ever be possible in a moving situation); • An assessment of their ability to add value; and, • A cull of those not deemed to add sufficient value. |
| 7 | As a longer term ambition, support an annual audit to demonstrate how the Oxfordshire Partnership has influenced public sector spending to increase the level of preventative services. | Agreed. The Internal Audit Service Plan 2007/08 includes a cross cutting audit of partnership working. This would essentially involve a look at the control environment of the partnership. I take this to mean an outcome-focused review of the partnership itself. We will be reviewing the partnership on an annual basis so will pick this up as part of that process. |
| 8 | Second people between agencies more often to promote a greater understanding amongst staff of the ways in which different partners address related issues. | I am personally very supportive of this and will discuss with the Cabinet Member for Change Management and the Head of HR how this can be implemented effectively. |
| 9 | Produce a good-practice case-study as an illustration of what the Local Strategic Partnership means for local people - to be used as a publicity resource. | Agreed. I am asking a member of staff in the Partnerships Unit to lead on this. |
| 10 | Actively look for innovative ways to raise the profile of the Partnership that will generate more publicity and raise public awareness. | This is the most problematic: engaging the general public as opposed to special interest groups is notoriously difficult and this area is perceived as remote and irrelevant to most. I am willing to start with elected Members, and to encourage fellow Council Leaders to do the same in their Councils because I believe political buy-in to this process is vitally important. I will take what opportunities there are to extend this to the wider public but I am not overly optimistic. |

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| 11 | Bring forward a proposal for introducing the concept of 'benefits management' by February 2008 | Agreed. I understand this to be about showing the difference the partnership has made. We can show this through examples from LAA1 (the annual review) and emphasise that by working together in partnership we have received a number of benefits. |
| 12 | Agree a basket of indicators to be used over a prolonged period of time that will allow them to monitor their impact in ensuring a real step change to the way services are delivered by the Partnership | Agreed. We will be using LAA2 as the action plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy. We can also choose the relevant indicators from the quality of life indicator set. These are useful in providing an overarching 'snapshot' of the key issues the partnership may need to consider. For example the indicators can be used to help facilitate comparisons of performance between different areas, inform the SCS and LAA, monitor change and assess and evaluate progress over time and enhance partnership working, shared ownership and joint action. |

Keith R Mitchell CBE FCA FCCA
Leader of the Council

20 June 2007