

# **OXFORDSHIRE WASTE PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE**

**10 July 2009**

## **Merger of Waste and Environment Partnerships**

### **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update on the proposed merger of the Oxfordshire Waste Partnership (OWP) with the Environment Partnership and to set out options for how the two partnerships might work together in future.

### **2 Background**

- 2.1 On 18 February 2009 the Public Service Board (PSB) approved a revised organisational structure for the Oxfordshire Partnership which includes the joining together of the OWP and Environment Partnership. The PSB will consider a further report to finalise the arrangement this July. The proposed merger was discussed by the OWP Joint Committee on 27 March 2009 (agenda item 6). Officers from both partnerships have subsequently met to consider the practicalities and options for taking forward proposals.
- 2.2 An initial proposal was put before the Environment Partnership meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> May, which suggested that the existing Environment Partnership became equivalent to the OWP Officer Strategy Group and that both these groups reported to a new Environment & Waste Joint Committee. The Joint Committee would have been based on the OWP model, but with expanded objectives, terms of reference and membership. The report tabled on 20<sup>th</sup> May is attached at appendix 1. This proposal was not supported by the Environment Partnership.
- 2.3 An alternative approach has subsequently been developed in outline terms. It is proposed that for the time being each partnership remains intact, with objectives, membership, and terms of reference unchanged. However, it is proposed that both partnerships meet on the same day and at the same venue. This will help to reduce the number of journeys made by members and might also help to boost local authority attendance at Environment Partnership meetings, which has been a little inconsistent to date.
- 2.4 It is also proposed that the two partnership meetings be chaired by the same person and that for 2009/10 this be Cllr John Tanner. It is considered appropriate that in future the Environment Partnership be chaired by an elected member from one of the Oxfordshire Local authorities, as the Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets for which the Environment Partnership is responsible will primarily be delivered using local authority resources.
- 2.5 The PSB requires a single progress report on the LAA targets for which OWP and the Environment Partnership are responsible. It is proposed that Officers draft a joint LAA targets monitoring report. This could be an overlapping item on the agendas of both meetings. The performance information will then be reported by the chairman to the PSB as required (currently on a quarterly basis).
- 2.6 If approved, it is proposed that the new meeting arrangements take effect from October 2009 and that they be reviewed after the first six months of operation. These proposals were broadly supported at a recent meeting of the OWP Officer Strategy Group, however, some concerns remain that a wider partnerships might lead to a loss of focus on waste issues.

## **OXFORDSHIRE WASTE PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE**

### **3 Financial, Risk and Staff Implications**

- 3.1 OWP has a dedicated annual revenue budget; currently £498,432 that is raised from Partner Council contributions. It also manages the New Initiatives Fund, currently valued at £827,144. In addition to OWP funds, the Partner Councils have agreed through OWP to new financial arrangements between the county and district councils based on the amount of waste recycled and landfilled. The Environment Partnership does not currently have a dedicated budget. There are no plans at this stage to alter the financial arrangements of either partnership.
- 3.2 The OWP Host Authority (currently Oxford City Council) provides administrative support to the joint committee, whereas admin support to the Environment Partnership is provided by the Oxfordshire County Council. In order to provide consistency, it is proposed that the OWP Host Authority also provides admin support at Environment Partnership meetings with effect from October 2009. There may be an additional cost of approximately £1,000 per annum for this additional support, which would have to be met by the Environment Partnership.
- 3.3 OWP has a dedicated Officer team (currently 3 posts). Support to the Environment Partnership is largely provided by County Council officers. There are no proposals to alter these arrangements at this stage.

### **4 Areas Affected**

- 4.1 Both OWP and the Environment Partnerships operate county wide.

### **5 Effect on Strategic Policies**

- 5.1 OWP's strategic Policies are unchanged by these proposals.

### **6 Options or Alternatives**

- 6.1 Alternative ways of achieving closer working arrangements between the partnerships may be proposed.

### **7 Recommendations**

- 7.1 That with effect from October 2009:
- OWP and Environment Partnership meetings be held "back-to-back" on the same day and at the same venue;
  - Administrative support to both meetings is provided by the OWP Host Authority;
  - Both partnerships be chaired by the same person and that this be an elected member from one of the Oxfordshire local authorities elected according to the current OWP constitution;
  - A joint LAA performance monitoring report is produced and considered by both OWP and Environment Partnership, and that this information be reported to the PSB as required.

## OXFORDSHIRE WASTE PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

### **8 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 8.1 To achieve joint performance reporting to the PSB on OWP and Environment Partnership LAA targets and to encourage greater joint working between the two partnerships.

### **9 Contact Officer**

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Background Papers: