

Paper for Oxford Strategic Partnership – Public Participation

Introduction

1. Following the Public Event in March 2010 and decisions made at the last meeting of the Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP) this paper sets out a framework and set of principles for further development of public participation in the work of the OSP. It is recommended that the model and principles are agreed and enacted by the Board and further work is done on refining links to other Partnerships, Forums and Networks, as set out in Annex 4.

The model of participation

2. Attached in Annex 1 is a model for public participation developed by the International Association for Participation. It sets out 5 levels of community participation:
 - Inform
 - Consult
 - Involve
 - Collaborate
 - Empower
3. It is proposed that the OSP should adopt this model and strive for the highest possible level of participation in all activities.

The Proposed Programme of Activities

4. It is proposed that the following activities are undertaken:
 - Flagship Champions should seek to hold at least one information/participation event in each year and report back to OSP about how this contributed to the current work.
 - Annual Conference to be held in January 2011.
 - To ensure public participation in the review of the OSP Strategy and Plan, required by 2012.
 - To build relationships with appropriate Partnerships, Fora and Networks in the City.
 - To utilise the partners' web based consultation tools, where appropriate to do so.

The Oxford City Council Consultation Tool Kit

5. Oxford City Council has developed a Consultation Tool Kit which is available to members of OSP and it is recommended as a guide to good practice. It provides detailed information on:
 - Key principles of consultations (see annex 2)

- Consultation process
- Stakeholders (see Annex 3)
- Key considerations when selecting your consultation audience
- Common questions to consider ahead of consultation
- Consultation methods
- Following up consultation exercises
- Incentive guidelines

Networks and Fora

6. In order to develop relationships with other fora and networks a number of existing and relevant links have been identified to support the public participation process. These are listed in Annex 4.

Resource implications

7. To deliver meaningful consultation and engagement with other organisations and the public requires a resource. Whilst we plan to tap into existing consultation processes it may be necessary to lead the consultation ourselves and an appropriate resource will need to be identified in order to do this. We recommend that this is considered on a case by case basis.

Recommendation

8. It is recommended that:
 - a) The model for public participation, as set out in this paper, is adopted by the OSP.
 - b) The proposed programme of activities is agreed.
 - c) Best practice, as set out in the Consultation Tool Kit, is adopted as our way of working.
 - d) Further work is done on refining the links to Partnerships, Forums and networks, as set out in Annex 4.
 - e) When consultation is planned we will aim to use existing resources where possible but resource implications will need to be considered on a case by case basis by the OSP.

Jackie Wilderspin, Chair, OSP

Val Johnson, Partnership Development Manager, Oxford City Council

July 2010

Annex 1

Please see pdf file entitled “IASS Ladder of Participation”

Annex 2

Key Principles for Consultation

(from Oxford City Council Consultation Toolkit)

1. Inclusiveness: the involvement of all people who are interested or would be affected by a decision. It is important to include groups that are often difficult to engage in consultation such as young people, black and minority ethnic groups and people with disabilities.

2. Transparency: ensuring that all stakeholders are given all the information they need to make an informed decision.

3. Commitment: providing the appropriate priority and resources.

4. Accessibility: providing a range of ways for people to be engaged and ensuring that people are not excluded through barriers of language, culture or opportunity.

5. Accountability: ensuring participants receive regular updates of how their contributions are being used.

6. Responsiveness: ensuring we remain open to new ideas and are willing to change existing ideas if necessary.

7. Respect: ensuring the views of participants are respected and people taking part in consultations are treated with respect.

8. Openness: demonstrate an open mind and a willingness to change where appropriate.

Annex 3

Stakeholders

(from Oxford City Council Consultation Toolkit)

Stakeholders are by definition people who have a 'stake' in a situation.

A series of questions designed to reveal relevant interests can also help to identify the right people to involve in any particular situation. Identifying your stakeholders is key to carrying out any consultation exercise successfully.

The main groups usually consist of:

■ **The whole community:** If you are talking about engaging 'the public' then you are probably thinking in terms of seeking public opinion about something, so you will want to run a process that involves a representative cross-section of your target population.

■ **A representative cross section of the community:** It may not be the public in general you want to involve, but people from a certain community, or even from a particular street.

■ **Specific groups in the community:** These may be people of a particular ethnic community, people with special needs, or people with a common interest in a shared concern. Many people are only interested in participating in engagement processes when the subject matter is something that concerns them personally, so you may get a better response by running several separate engagement processes with a tighter local focus than a single one that is more general.

■ **Professionals, experts, and the organisations that have a statutory right to be involved:** These are people and organisations who have to be involved in engagement and consultation either by law (hence 'statutory') or by virtue of the positions they hold, for example organisations such as the Environment Agency and local councils, and individuals such as Members of Parliament. People of seniority in the community may be very influential and should always know about what local engagement is going on and be invited to participate.