

Oxfordshire Compact: Consultation and Policy Appraisal Code

To be read in conjunction with the Oxfordshire Compact.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In 2004 a wide range of statutory agencies and voluntary, community and faith (VCF) sector organisations operating in Oxfordshire, signed a partnership agreement known as the 'Oxfordshire Compact'.
- 1.2. Signing the Compact is a commitment to developing the partnership and producing protocols relating to:
 - funding
 - consultation code
 - engaging organisations that represent black and minority ethnic groups
 - volunteering
 - community groups
- 1.3. The Consultation Code sets out ways in which statutory agencies and voluntary and community sector organisations should consult with one another in relation to:
 - Effective consultation as a key part of the policy-making process.
 - People's views shaping policies and setting the agenda for better services.
 - Consultation as a two-way process in which all are equal partners, and both statutory and voluntary and community sector organisations have duties and responsibilities when consulting or being consulted with.
 - Taking all reasonable steps to ensure that the processes and procedures are as inclusive as possible.
- 1.4. The Compact Steering Group will monitor how organisations follow the Consultation Code and, if necessary, it will recommend changes to the way Compact partners consult.
- 1.5. The code is not a legal document but should be followed except in exceptional circumstances. This code sets out minimum standards; there may be other statutory guidance relevant to particular consultations which

organisations may have to follow, or good practice which organisations choose to follow.

- 1.6 The Compact already includes a number of commitments in relation to consultation processes. These are not all repeated here but nonetheless should be assumed to be part of the Consultation Code. Please refer to paragraphs 6.4, 6.6 and 7.4 from the Oxfordshire Compact.

The organisations adopting the code will follow the good practice outlined below:

2. Our Shared Commitments

Taking part in consultations

- 2.1 Aim to play a full and active part in responding to relevant consultations.

Planning consultations

- 2.2 Think carefully about who should be consulted and which consultation methods would be appropriate to the topic and audience.
- 2.3 Be aware of any potential conflicts of interest arising from the subject of the consultation and those being consulted.
- 2.4 Minimise the time and financial costs of taking part in the consultation.

Communicate clearly

- 2.5 Make it clear:
- how to take part and find out more information
 - why the consultation is being carried out
 - what the proposals are
 - who may be affected
 - what questions are being asked
 - timescales for responses
 - what can and can't be changed as a result of the consultation.

Timing

- 2.6 Make sure consultations take place at an appropriate time to allow results to feed into any policy-making decisions.
- 2.7 Allow an appropriate amount of time for interested parties to take part in the consultation. If less time has been allowed than those taking part might expect, the reasons for this should be explained to them.

Co-ordination

- 2.8 All organisations will work together to improve the co-ordination of consultation – unless there are specific reasons for not doing so, information about planned and completed consultations should be shared.

Accessibility

- 2.9 Use consultation methods appropriate to the audience.
- 2.10 Ensure consultation materials are ‘accessible’. This includes using clear language and, where appropriate, providing materials in other formats such as different languages, large print, Braille, audio etc.
- 2.11 Take all reasonable steps to ensure that any venues used are accessible for those attending. For meetings where you know who is attending, ask if anyone has any special requirements. For meetings where you do not know who is attending use a venue which is accessible for wheelchair users and provide a microphone or hearing induction loop.

After the consultation

- 2.12 Carry out accurate and robust analysis of the information collected.
- 2.13 Make the results, including the reasons for any decisions taken, accessible to interested parties.

3. Statutory Sector Commitments

- 3.1 Recognise that some organisations represent and support others. Be clear whose views you are seeking e.g. if you are consulting organisations with members state whether you are seeking its views from current knowledge or expecting it to consult with its members.
- 3.2 Where appropriate support the voluntary or community sector organisation to publicise and carry out consultations on behalf of the statutory sector.
- 3.3 Be sensitive about any costs to the organisation if they are expected to consult with their members. Voluntary and Community Sector Commitments

4. Voluntary & Community Sector Commitments

- 4.1 Make it clear when taking part in a consultation whose views have been given. For example those of the chairperson, the whole organisation or the organisations it represents.
- 4.2 Further information about the Oxfordshire Compact can be found by logging on to www.oxfordshire.gov.uk, emailing compact@oxfordshire.gov.uk or by contacting a Steering Group member:

Oxfordshire Council for Voluntary Action

The Old Court House, Floyds Row, St Aldates, Oxford, OX1 1SS
01865 251946

Banbury Council for Voluntary Service

27 Horsefair, Banbury, Oxon, OX16 7TN
01295 279515

Age Concern Oxfordshire

St Edmunds House, 39 West St. Helen Street, Abingdon, OX14 5BW
01235 849400.

Oxfordshire Council of Disabled People

35 Leopold Street, Oxford, OX4 1TW
01865 792226

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

Jericho Farm, Worton, Witney,
01865 883488

Churches Together in Oxfordshire

The Right Reverend the Bishop of Dorchester, Arran House, 12 Sandy Lane,
Yarnton, Kidlington, Oxon, OX5 1PB
01865 375541

Oxfordshire County Council The Communities Team, Chief Executive's Office,
County Hall, New Road, Oxford, OX1 1ND 01865 810133

Oxford City Council

Strategy & Review Unit, Town Hall, St Aldates, Oxford, OX1 1BX
01865 252509

Vale of White Horse District Council

Assistant Director, Benefits Service, Abbey House, Abingdon, OX14 3JE
01235 540327

South Oxfordshire District Council

Partnership Officer, Benson Lane, Crowmarsh Gifford, Wallingford, OX10 8HQ
01491 823705

Oxfordshire Joint Partnership Unit (Oxon NHS & Social Care) Yarnton

House, Rutten Lane, Yarnton, Oxfordshire, OX5 1LP
01865 854457