



# South Bucks Partnership Handbook

July 2011



## *South Bucks*



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## South Bucks Partnership Handbook



As chairman of the South Bucks Partnership I am pleased to introduce this handbook which I hope you will find useful as a guide to the Partnership.

The Partnership in its current form came into being in December 2008, with the merger between what was then the South Bucks Partnership and the Joint Local Committee. This added strength by involving democratically elected members from each Parish Council and eight District and County Councillors with a focus on understanding the needs of local communities.

A key role of the South Bucks Partnership is to apply public resources effectively through identifying priorities for the local area, set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy, published originally in November 2009. This sets out a vision for South Bucks to 2026 and followed extensive consultation with residents, community groups, voluntary organisations and local businesses. Regular workshops have been held to check that our priorities are still valid and to identify areas of specific focus for the short to medium term.

With recent Government changes such as the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Localism Bill and the shift towards personal responsibility, we believe that the Partnership is even more important in its role of setting aside time for partners to take a step back and really look at what matters to local people, their priorities and how best these can be delivered collectively for the good of South Bucks communities.

I look forward to working with you as part of this Partnership and to making a real difference to improving the quality of local services.

**Cllr Adrian Busby**  
Chairman of South Bucks Partnership

## Background to Local Strategic Partnerships

Local Strategic Partnerships are a collection of organisations or representatives from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors that voluntarily come together to work in partnership, first introduced in the Local Government Act 2000. In July 2008, the role for Local Strategic Partnerships was enhanced to take responsibility for identifying needs of communities, co-ordinating engagement activities of partners, developing a Sustainable Community Strategy.

“It is the role of Local Strategic Partnerships to collectively shape and steer the strategic commissioning of local services across their locality, turning the long-term vision set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy into a reality.”

To fulfil this role, joint working through Local Strategic Partnerships has tended to happen at three levels:

- **Strategic:** to build consensus on how partners would like to see their area change over the next 10-20 years, discuss concerns and agree common goals and priorities
- **Board:** using the vision to allocate resources, set targets and oversee performance
- **Operational:** sub-groups manage performance and shape service delivery to meet the agreed goals

Representatives on the Local Strategic Partnership need to have direct or delegated authority to support agreed actions. Decisions must be formalised via the relevant local authority or partner as applicable.

Whilst the Coalition Government has removed the statutory requirement to have a local partnership and abolished Local Area Agreements in October 2010, the success of the South Bucks Partnership has generated the desire to continue to work together for the good of South Bucks communities. The Partnership believes that in a time of reduced spending, it is even more important to work together to reduce overlaps and find ways to deliver more for less.

## South Bucks Partnership

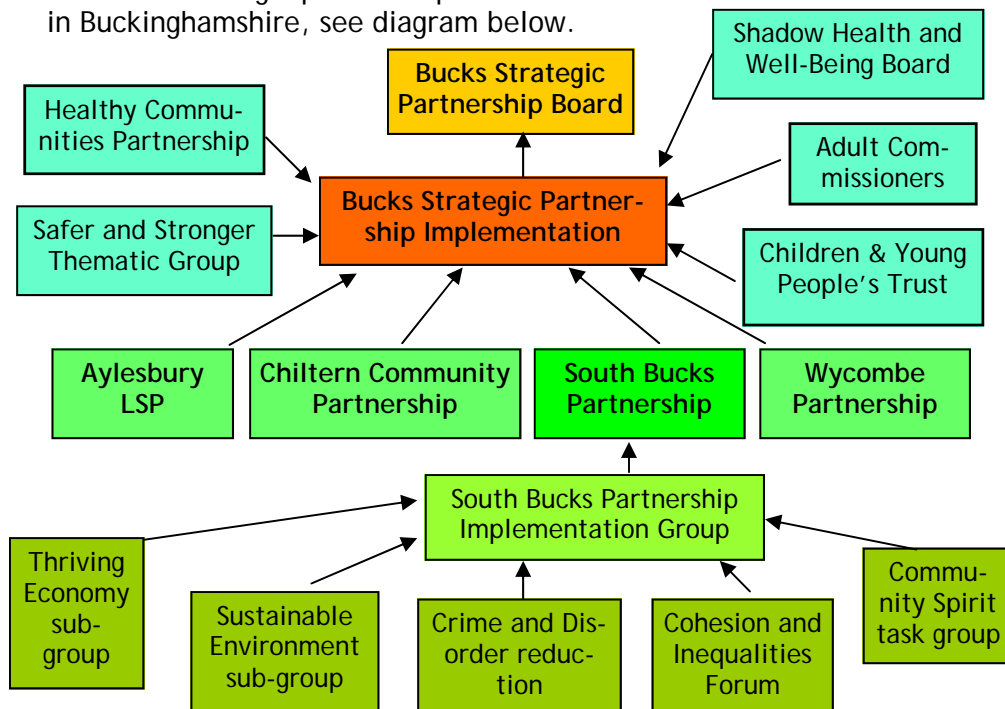
The partnership draws together the work of all key public sector, business and voluntary partners to deliver the agreed priorities for the District. It was first formed in 2002. Early in 2009 the Partnership merged with the Joint Local Committee, this strengthened Councillor involvement as an integral part of partnership governance across all three tiers. Its constitution was amended to reflect its new role.

### South Bucks Partnership

includes representatives from:  
(number of voting members in brackets)

- All Parish/Town Councils (1 each)
- County Council (8)
- District Council (8)
- Business and learning sector (2)
- Voluntary and community sector (2)
- Faith community (1)
- Thames Valley Police (1)
- Bucks Fire and Rescue (1)
- Bucks Primary Care Trust (1)

South Bucks Partnership is one of five local strategic partnerships in Buckinghamshire, see diagram below.



## South Bucks Partnership Constitution

This constitution guides the work of the Partnership. It was agreed by all Partners in January 2009 and is reviewed annually.

**The key aim of the Partnership is to co-ordinate and increase the effectiveness of public services in South Bucks.**

This will be achieved by:

- identifying the needs and aspirations of local communities, reconciling competing interests where necessary but recognising the value of diversity
- assisting Councillors to engage with their communities and with local views and so be enabled to balance priorities and co-ordinate shared functions
- producing a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) based on identified needs and priorities
- ensuring effective links with the Bucks Strategic Partnership and county-wide Sustainable Community Strategy as a part of the "family" of LSP's in Buckinghamshire
- shaping and steering the strategic commissioning of local services, jointly where possible, to deliver better effectiveness and economies of scale both across the district and in localities, turning the long-term vision set out in the SCS into reality
- engaging actively in the establishment of targets and reviewing and managing performance and progress against those targets in the district
- taking part in the consideration of strategic highways matters
- co-ordinating community consultation and putting in place a continuing process of planned engagement and involvement for the public
- formulating shared views on local issues of mutual interest and concern, responding to relevant consultations and identifying areas of concern with service delivery and flexibility to help diverse groups of users
- linking appropriately with any neighbourhood forums operating within the District which have relevance
- establishing a shared understanding of the totality of resources across the partnership and creatively stimulate capacity to deliver effectively from all partners.

## South Bucks Partnership Implementation Group

The remit of the Implementation Group relates to delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy, reporting back to the South Bucks Partnership.

Its responsibilities cover the following areas:

- (a) Analyse and establish means to gather information on community needs and aspirations and report back to the Partnership so that it can identify priorities and conclusions.
- (b) Consult and engage with communities, taking into account the different communities of interest and ensuring engagement reflects that diversity. Report back to the Partnership as necessary.
- (c) Develop action plans as required and strategies to ensure the delivery of Sustainable Community Strategy, reporting back regularly on progress to the Partnership.
- (d) Monitor the achievement of key performance indicators and establish the reason for blockages or problems and report back to the Partnership as required.
- (e) Prepare an annual review of the Sustainable Community Strategy and other activities for partnership overview.

**South Bucks Partnership Implementation Group** includes representatives from:

- At least one Parish/Town Council
- County Council
- District Council
- Business and learning sector
- Voluntary and community sector
- Thames Valley Police
- Bucks Fire and Rescue
- Bucks Primary Care Trust

Representation tends to be at officer level.

## South Bucks Partnership Sub Groups

A number of sub-groups have been established to assist the Implementation Group with the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy and the achievement of related targets. These are:

**Thriving Economy Sub-Group**

**Sustainable Environment Sub-Group**

**Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership**

**Cohesion and Inequalities Forum**

**Community Spirit Task Group**

These sub-groups take responsibility for delivering the outcomes within their theme from the Sustainable Community Strategy this includes analysing the way services are delivered and looking for opportunities to deliver services in a more efficient and/or joined-up way. They ensure issues relating to their theme are considered when the partnership is focussing delivery on other themes from the Sustainable Community Strategy. It is noted that there is no Health and Well-being sub-group, however we do link in with the Bucks-wide Shadow Health and Well-being Board. Local health issues are raised through the South Bucks Partnership Implementation Group.

## Local and Neighbourhood Plans

Parish Plans and Neighbourhood Action Plans have contributed to the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy and act as local delivery plans for some outcomes.

Parish Plans are an excellent way to translate how the broader priorities set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy will affect local residents.

## Roles and Responsibilities of Members

The South Bucks Partnership is democratically accountable to local people through the role played by Councillors representing the concerns and wishes of the community. There is an expectation councillors will take on a wider governance role of the District.

Members's commitment to joint decision making must be present for the partnership to make an impact. It is expected partners will have delegated authority from their organisations to take decisions within the terms of reference. It is expected decisions will be reached by consensus.

Other key features are:

- Members share a clear vision and a shared commitment to achieve agreed outcomes.
- All members are equal partners within a non-hierarchical framework
- All members aim to keep promises and deliver on commitments.
- Discussions at the Partnership meetings are strategic and ambitious
- Within the partnership there is a sense of equality with a culture of change and challenge. Partners constructively challenge proposals and seek better alternatives
- Members come prepared for the meeting to represent their organisation and the views of local people they represent
- Members unable to attend meetings send an informed named substitute to represent them

## Community Engagement

It is the role of the partnership to continually engage with local residents to improve their understanding of the needs of residents. There is an implied duty to involve residents in the decisions that are taken and to ensure that both the Sustainable Community Strategy, any local Parish Plans and Action Plans reflect the needs of local communities. The new Localism Bill seeks to ensure people have greater opportunities to have their say and shape local priorities. There is an expectation that the South Bucks Partnership will be a key vehicle for involving local people.

## What makes effective partnership working?

There is no single formula for effective partnership working, however there are some broad principles of effective partnership working that can help Local Strategic Partnerships improve their effectiveness.

'Progress through Partnership' has identified a number of success criteria for local strategic partnerships:

- Developing a strong shared vision for the local area that has buy-in from local partners and the community
- Establishing robust governance and performance management frameworks with clear roles and responsibilities for delivery and managing risk at all levels
- Partnerships need to engage local people in a dialogue about the future of their area and how best to prioritise and tackle local issues. There are clear communication channels between the partnership and the public.
- Translating strategic priorities into real change on the ground through practical and achievable delivery plans
- Engaging elected members provides the link with communities at neighbourhood and ward level
- Building trust amongst partners and engaging elected members and representatives from voluntary, community and business sectors
- Embedding change and demonstrating success. Evidence of delivering sustainable improvements through the added value of working together.
- The right meeting style is adopted to facilitate true partnership working.

The partnership undertakes an annual self-assessment and reports improvement actions in its Annual Report.

## Glossary of frequently used acronyms

AC— Audit Commission  
BCC—Bucks County Council  
BBF—Bucks Business First  
BSP— Bucks Strategic Partnership  
BSPIG—Bucks Strategic Partnership Implementation Group  
CDRP—Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership  
CLG—Department for Communities and Local Government  
LAA— Local Area Agreement  
LSP— Local Strategic Partnership  
NI—National Indicator  
PCT—Primary Care Trust  
PtP—Progress through Partnership Organisation  
SBDC—South Bucks District Council  
SBP— South Bucks Partnership  
SBPIG—South Bucks Partnership Implementation Group  
SCS - Sustainable Community Strategy  
TVP—Thames Valley Police  
VCS—Voluntary and Community Sector

## Key Documents

The following can be found on the South Bucks Website  
[www.southbucks.gov.uk](http://www.southbucks.gov.uk) / council and democracy/ south bucks  
parntership:

- South Bucks Sustainable Community Strategy
- South Bucks Partnership Annual Report
- Members of the South Bucks Partnership
- Meeting dates, agendas and minutes

Other useful websites include:

[www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk) "Working Better Together Guide"

[www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk)

[www.progressthroughpartnership.org.uk/](http://www.progressthroughpartnership.org.uk/)

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