

# Southampton Connect

## The local strategic partnership for the city

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Southampton Connect is the Local Strategic Partnership for the city of Southampton. It brings together the leaders of key agencies and representative umbrella organisations to work collaboratively to improve the quality of life in Southampton.

Local Strategic Partnerships are a single entity with a remit to provide an over-arching framework for local co-ordination. They were established in 2001 as a result of government legislation for England. This gave local authorities the power to act to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of their areas. Those authorities that received additional government funding to support regeneration in their areas were required to set up partnership bodies to oversee the development of a Community Strategy. This is entitled the 'City of Southampton Strategy' and provides the vision and aspirations for the city until 2026. This is currently under Review, with a new City Plan under development. It is expected to be published in autumn 2011.

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Since the legislation came into force, the concept of Local Strategic Partnerships has spread to all authorities and other organisations.

The community strategy identifies the key issues, needs and aspirations within the community, across organisational boundaries, and delivers outcomes that matter most to local people. The focus is on working together to tackle a number of major challenges that the city faces.

It has identified that there are two city priorities:

- Sustained economic growth
- Low cost, efficient, customer centred services

There are four City Challenges to take forward:

- Economic development
- Educational attainment and skills
- Well being
- A sustainable, green and attractive environment

Southampton Connect leaders meet monthly. Linked to the core partners are a number of partnership groups, each of which is focussed on a particular interest or challenge. Some of these are required by other related legislation or regulation, such as the Children and Young People's Partnership. Others are less formal, such as the Energy Partnership, which acts as a forum for local organisations to work together to reduce CO2 emissions across the city.

The partnership is flexible and will establish time limited working groups to address issues and new challenges as they arise. It also holds two stakeholder conferences per year to engage collaborative partners. It communicates progress by publishing briefing notes and e-bulletins through its website.

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The partnership approach is based on the rationale that organisations working together at a local level can bring greater effectiveness and efficiency and achievement of mutual outcomes than working separately would achieve. The community strategy or City Plan defines the objectives the city council and its partners will jointly work to achieve. It sets out clear, measurable outcomes and milestones that will demonstrate progress made.



Southampton Connect and the family of partnerships are resourced in different ways. Some are legally required and are resourced by governmental bodies either locally or nationally. Others are more voluntary groupings and resourced by volunteers, or in-kind support by individual partner organisations. In the past the partnership has overseen regeneration funding programmes in the city.



The Southampton Partnership and its related sub-partnerships are all contributing to the achievement of the City of Southampton Sustainable Community Strategy. The opinions of users of the services are gathered in a variety of ways. Some services within a partnership undertake direct surveys of users, while more general opinions about the city and the local authority are undertaken on a national basis. Other perception surveys, such as the 'perception of crime' survey are also undertaken on a national basis.

Evaluation of the Southampton Partnership and the related sub-partnership groups has been undertaken by independent governmental inspection processes. These were carried out by the Audit Commission, as well as specific service related inspection bodies. These arrangements are changing to more local systems. Partnership arrangements are so important to many services that it will be a key part of the assessment undertaken. Evaluation is both qualitative and quantitative.

Website: [www.southampton-connect.com](http://www.southampton-connect.com)

