



**Committee: Corporate Policy & Resources**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

**Subject: Review of Key Strategic Partnerships**

Report by:

Executive Director of Resources

Contact Officer:

Corporate Policy & Governance Manager  
Telephone: 01427 676537

Purpose / Summary:

1. To provide the Committee with details of the key strategic partnerships that the Council are involved in and the associated costs.
2. To set out an approach to ensure greater oversight and evaluation of the effectiveness of such partnerships.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):** The Committee is asked to:

- a) Review the details provided of the key partnerships and support the Council's approach to partnership working
- b) Support the proposed actions detailed at 6.1 et seq

**IMPLICATIONS**

**Legal:** None, each partnership assesses its own legal obligations

**Financial:** FIN-173-19 – Associated costs are absorbed within current structures/budgets.

**Staffing:** None – staff resources for partnership working are considered within the overall requirements to ensure effective service delivery

**Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:** None

**Risk Assessment:** None

**Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:** None

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**  
None.

**Call in and Urgency:**

**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

*i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)*

**Yes**

**No**

**x**

**Key Decision:**

*A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications*

**Yes**

**No**

**x**

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## 1. Definition of Partnership

- 1.1 To provide consistency of approach and common understanding for colleagues involved in partnership working, the following definition of partnership has been used in this review: “A joint working arrangement where the partners are otherwise independent bodies; agree to co-operate to achieve a common goal and to achieve it, create an organisational structure or process and agreed programme while sharing information, risks and rewards proportionately.” (The Audit Commission (2003).

## 2. Background

- 2.1 The purpose of this review was to ensure that the risks, benefits and costs of partnership working were assessed in order to allow them to be appropriately monitored in the future, with the intention of achieving a more efficient and effective approach to partnership working across the Council.
- 2.2 Prior to this review, it had been a number of years since a concerted effort was made to undertake a co-ordinated review of the partnerships the Council was involved in. In early 2015, work was undertaken with the Wider Leadership Team (as then) to discuss the concept of partnership working and to create and populate a partnership register. The content of the register however was made up of not only formal outcome focused partnerships, but also informal networks and professional relationships. This resulted in 54 separate ‘partnerships’ detailed within the register. Details are available in Appendix A.
- 2.3 The work undertaken in 2015 was in part response to limited assurance audit findings of 2011 and 2014 in relation to the Council’s consideration of, approach to and oversight and evaluation of partnership working.
- 2.4 Since 2015, the workforce of the Council has changed, new areas of work have commenced and new partnerships have been created while others may have ceased to operate. Therefore a review was timely.
- 2.5 Also, since 2015 two audits have been undertaken into specific partnerships the Council is involved in. A further audit reviewed the Council’s application of the ‘Intelligent Client’ role. Further details are set out below.

| <b>Audit</b>                       | <b>Finding</b>        |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| CBL Partnership (Aug 16)           | Limited Assurance     |
| CBL Partnership Follow-Up (Jan 18) | Substantial Assurance |

|                             |                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Intelligent Client (Jun 17) | Substantial Assurance |
| NK/WL Partnership (Nov 17)  | Substantial Assurance |

2.6 Despite this evidence of progress, it is acknowledged that there is no formally agreed system or requirement for partnership lead officers to report progress and performance to management. In general this matter is addressed via one to one meetings and relevant discussions with Directors and is regarded as business as usual activity. However, this approach could lead to inconsistency and lack of understanding and transparency in respect of the effectiveness of the Council's key strategic partnerships.

### 3. Review

3.1 Scope of the Review

3.2 The following Terms of Reference were adopted In order to clarify the scope and objectives of the review:

- To re-iterate the definition of a partnership
- To use the information within the existing partnership register as a baseline for the review
- To establish a list of the key strategic partnerships the Council is involved in
- To review the level of involvement and costs/benefits of these partnerships
- To identify which partnerships should be maintained or cease
- To develop an effective monitoring approach to partnerships
- To develop a mechanism for annual reporting

3.3 The review entailed discussions with each team manager. These initially produced a list of the partnerships and meetings attended by officers in their service areas. This included formal partnerships, joint working groups, networking meetings, board meetings and contract management arrangements. However, once the definition of partnership as set out above was applied, the key partnerships associated with each service became apparent.

3.4 To assess the relative value of each partnership, a series of questions were posed. These are available at Appendix B below

3.5 Additionally an attempt was made to quantify the costs involved in partnership working. This includes the monies paid into the partnership by the Council, plus associated staff costs (a Team Manager average hourly rate of £30.38 inc on-costs has been used). Travel costs were also estimated.

## **4 Results of the Review**

- 4.1 Having applied the strong definition of partnership, 18 key strategic partnerships have been identified. These are set out in Appendix C which is attached, along with supporting information.
- 4.2 Of the other 36 'partnerships' from the original 54 identified, 23 did not meet the definition of a key strategic partnership (as they were a combination of either informal or organisational networks or professional relationships) and the remaining 13 no longer exist, or we no longer participate in them.
- 4.3 The review has established that generally, the partnerships currently in place are healthy and of benefit to the Council.
- 4.4 The main exception is the Strategic Health Partnership. The lead officer has set out the background to its formation. It derives from the Challenge & Improvement Committee's Health Commission which sought to identify and address the health related issues facing the District. This brought together health related providers to discuss matters and there has been a desire for some form of partnership to continue. However, due to both the success of the Health Commission, and the incorporation of health into wider Council policies and work, there is currently no clear role for a Strategic Health Partnership at the present time.
- 4.5 Health is not a statutory obligation for the Council, nor do we directly fund any resource in this area. Therefore, until there is a clear understanding as to the role and influence this Council has in health provision it is felt that the partnership should not continue at this time, as the benefits are difficult to identify.

## **5. Costs of Partnership Working**

- 5.1 The estimated annual costs associated with each partnership have also been calculated. These have been based on any annual financial contributions the Council make (£557,400), estimated travel costs associated with attending meetings (£1,835) and also an estimate of the staff costs, based on the number of staff attending each meeting and the frequency of meetings associated with each partnership (£26,110).
- 5.2 The estimated total annual costs have therefore been calculated as £585,345. Details are available in Appendix D below.

## **6. Proposed Next Steps**

- 6.1 Following this review, an on-going structured approach to partnership monitoring will be developed. This will entail an annual review of partnerships which will be incorporated into the service/business

planning cycle. The product of this review will form part of the Monitoring Officer's annual report on the Council's governance arrangements.

- 6.2 To enable this, partnership lead officers will be expected to monitor the effectiveness of their partnerships and to justify on-going involvement, assess the likely costs/benefits before becoming involved with a new partnership. As part of service/business planning, each partnership lead will provide brief details of the activities/achievements of the partnership over the previous year and planned activity for the forthcoming year
- 6.3 To increase accountability and transparency, officers will report back on partnership meetings and provide notes and other associated documents to be stored centrally within a newly cleansed register.
- 6.4 The current Partnership Approved Code of Practice (ACoP) will be revised, taking account of the above and will be presented for approval by Management Team early in 2019.
- 6.5 Finally, a greater use should be made of video/teleconferencing to reduce travel costs and the time taken to attend partnership meetings, thus making this work more efficient.
- 6.6 The above actions will be communicated to colleagues via workshops and Senior Leadership Team meetings.