

PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP GUIDANCE

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report introduces a proposed Partnership Guidance for Members' consideration and approval.

2 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 When the former Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 2005/2006 examined five of the key partnerships the Council was involved in, one of the key recommendations to emerge was the need for some guidance for the Council around Partnerships, to provide a clear framework for determining whether to enter into partnerships and the factors to be taken into account (min 468/2005). A draft guidance document has now been prepared for Members' consideration, comment and approval. A copy is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The document contains a definition of partnership and on the basis of that definition, outlines the key partnership arrangements the Council is involved in. It outlines the reasoning behind why the Council would wish to get involved in partnerships and sets out a range of questions which need to be addressed in terms of assessing proposed new partnership arrangements and reviewing existing partnerships.
- 2.3 Subject to Members agreeing the draft guidance document, work will commence on a rolling programme of reviews of the existing partnerships listed in the document. In line with the decisions taken by Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee and endorsed by full Council (min. 468/2005), those partnerships reviewed last year by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be excluded from that review. These are the Local Strategic Partnership, the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership, the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Children and Young Persons Strategic Partnership. The other partnership reviewed last year, the Joint Health Board, was wound up by the Primary Care Trust following our review.

3 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 It is important for the Council to have some form of framework document in place, to minimise the risk to the Authority of getting involved in partnership arrangements which prove non-productive and resource intensive.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 It is anticipated that there will be minimum additional resources involved in the application of the guidance document and the review of partnerships.

5 RECOMMENDATION

5.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

- (1) To approve the Partnership Guidance document as set out in the Appendix.
- (2) Subject to (1), to use the Guidance document to aid the review of Partnerships as already agreed by Council.

Paul Warren

Chief Executive

For further information please contact Paul Warren on:-

Tel:- 01702 318199

E-Mail:- paul.warren@rochford.gov.uk

ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

PARTNERSHIP GUIDANCE

Introduction

Working in partnership is a key area for local authorities and other public bodies. The number of partnerships is growing, both in response to central government requirements and as a result of local initiatives. Working in partnership can be a productive way of achieving more efficient and effective use of scarce resources.

Since local councils have been charged with the duty to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of their area, the scope for partnership working has increased enormously. However partnership working can be difficult to do well, it can be costly if not properly managed and it may not deliver the desired outcomes if the aims and objectives are not clear.

External reviews of the Council have commented that the Authority “punches above its weight” in connection with the partnership agenda but it is important for the Council to ensure that any new partnerships it enters into “add value” to the workings of the Authority and existing partnerships are regularly reviewed in this respect.

The principal purpose of this guidance is therefore to provide a framework against which to “test” potential new partnerships and examine existing ones, to ensure that the Authority can be reassured that the partnership under consideration is one which contributes positively to its agenda. The term “partnership” has been defined by a variety of agencies, from the Audit Commission through to Central Government and various educational and research institutions.

That favoured by the Council is a slightly modified version of that outlined by the Audit Commission.

A partnership describes a joint working agreement where the partners:

- Are otherwise independent bodies
- Agree to come together to cooperate to achieve a common goal or outcomes
- Create and develop a process to achieve that goal or outcomes, and where appropriate, create a new organisational structure to deliver that achievement
- Plan and implement a jointly agreed programme, which may involve joint staffing and/or resources
- Share relevant information
- Share risks and pool rewards, where appropriate

- May be required by statute to come together for the purposes of joint working

On the basis of that definition, the key partnerships the Council is currently involved in is outlined in Appendix 1.

Why work in partnership?

Working in partnership can be a more productive way of delivering an outcome and utilising resources. From a District Council perspective, the key reasons for entering into partnership arrangements are as follows:

1. To support the Council's overall vision and corporate aims

The Council vision is to make Rochford the place of choice in the county to live, work and visit.

To help us realise our vision, the Council has adopted six principal aims. These are to:

1. Provide quality, cost effective services
2. Work towards a safer and more caring community
3. Provide a green and sustainable environment
4. Encourage a thriving local economy
5. Improve the quality of life for people in the district
6. Maintain and enhance our local heritage

2. To meet Government requirements

Central Government is increasingly placing duties on local organisations and agencies to work together in partnership. The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership is an example of this, although the partnership work in this area also fits in with the Council's aims outlined above.

3. To assist our partners to meet their aims where it can be demonstrated that such working would be of benefit to the communities that make up Rochford District.

This may be particularly important in the context of securing additional external sources of funding.

Partnership Good Practice

New Partnerships

Before entering into any new partnerships, the Council needs to satisfy itself around a range of issues. In particular, the Council needs to be clear about:

- Why the partnership is required?
- Who are the main potential partners?

- Are those partners clear about their involvement and commitment?
- Is there agreement around the purpose of the partnership?
- How will the partnership add value to what the Council is doing? Can that value be demonstrated to the public?
- How will it contribute to the reasons for Council involvement outlined above?
- What inputs will the Council have to make in Member and officer time, funding, use of assets, etc?
- How the Council's corporate governance arrangements link into the partnership and the other main partners?
- What authority/powers will the Partnership have?
- How decisions are to be taken and recorded?
- Where accountability for those decisions and their action will rest?
- How, if relevant, they will be scrutinised
- How the performance of the partnership is to be managed and assessed?
- How are the finances to be managed?
- How are risks to be managed and addressed?
- What the termination arrangements will be if the partnership comes to an end or if the Council decides to pull out?
- Where the partnership will be serving the public, what arrangements will be in place to ensure effective public communications and where things do go wrong or complaints/suggestions are raised by the public, how these will be addressed?

As to whether all the above are relevant to the particular partnership arrangement in question, much will depend on the scale and the nature of the activity involved. However, it is considered that the Council will need to be satisfied that all the items listed below have been covered:

- There is a clear rationale for the partnership; and
- It will provide added value; and
- Governance arrangements are clear; and
- Performance management, financial management and risk management are accounted for;
- Termination arrangements are understood

Existing Partnership

In connection with existing partnerships, the Council will review each of its partnership arrangements on a rolling programme every 3 years.

On an annual basis each partnership will be formally asked in March of each year for details of its:

- Terms of reference
- Governance arrangements
- Funding arrangements and management
- Performance management details

In addition, each Partnership will be requested to remind each of its key participants of their roles and responsibilities in connection with the Partnership and to reconfirm their commitment to the partnership.

For the purposes of any review of existing partnerships in terms of the Council's continuing commitment, the Council will wish to satisfy itself around:

- The need for the partnership to continue
- The commitment, role and responsibilities of the various partners
- The value of the partnership to the Council and its own role and responsibilities within the partnership
- The governance, performance management, financial and risk management arrangements of the partnership

The questions covered in reviewing existing partnerships will be similar to those outlined above in respect of new partnerships.

Implementation

The rolling programme reviewing existing partnerships will be managed by the Corporate Policy Unit with input from relevant Divisions as required. Once an assessment has been made, a report will be prepared for the Policy, Finance and Strategic Performance Committee for consideration and comment whether to reaffirm commitment to a particular partnership or to disengage.

Where a potential new partnership is emerging, the relevant Divisional Head will undertake an assessment and report his/her conclusions into the appropriate Policy Committee. In this way the Committee can consider whether the new partnership is likely to contribute to or complement the work undertaken by the Authority.

KEY PARTNERSHIPS

Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership (TGSE) plus sub groups **(CEX)**
Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) **(CPM)**
Children and Young Persons Strategic Partnership (CYPSYP) **(HCS)**
Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), plus sub groups around
Drugs, Alcohol and Domestic Violence **(CEX)**
Healthier Communities and Older People Partnership **(HCS)**
Crouch and Roach Estuary Management Group **(HPT)**
Essex Waste Management Advisory Board **(HES)**
Thames Gateway Area Waste Joint Committee **(HES)**
STAR Partnership **(CPM)**
Youth Strategy Group **(HCS)**
Ground Work Trust South Essex **(CD(ES))**
Essex On Line Partnership **(HAMS)**

CEX – Chief Executive

CPM – Corporate Policy Manager

HCS – Head of Community Services

HPT – Head of Planning and Transportation

HES – Head of Environmental Services

CD(ES) – Corporate Director (External Services)

HAMS – Head of Administration and Member Services