Rochford District Council Partnership Guidance

Rochford
District Council

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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 an excellent cost effective frontline service for all our customers
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.
Within this context, Central Government has recently introduced guidance that introduces essential elements for effective partnership working providing six 'Hallmarks' of effective partnerships as a basis for good practice (**Delivering Safer Communities:** A guide to effective partnership working).
Whilst this guidance is aimed primarily at Crime and Disorder Partnerships, it also states:
'The Hallmarks of effective Partnerships are intended to summarise the core elements of effective partnership working. They provide a way for partnerships to check if they are delivering effectively or if there are areas where they should target improvements. They flow from the views of our stakeholders, our own work in supporting improvements in partnership performance at local level and from the Government's broader reform agenda'.

These six Hallmarks of effective practice are:

1. Empowered and Effective Leadership
2. Intelligence- led Business Processes
3. Effective and Responsive Delivery Systems
4. Engaged Communities
5. Visible and Constructive Accountability
6. Appropriate Skills and Knowledge

Most of the requirements within these Hallmarks are generic to all partnerships that this Council is part of and as good practice; the Council is including these Hallmarks

as part of the 'Partnership Guidance' document and intends to share this with the key partners it is involved with.

The elements within the Hallmarks of effective practice are outlined in Appendix 2

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 the following:

- 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

To assist new partnerships in ensuring that they meet the above issues, a series of questions will be asked and a risk assessment completed.

Questions for New Partnerships are outlined in Appendix 3

Existing Partnership

In connection with existing partnerships, the Council will review each of its main partnership arrangements on a rolling programme every 3 years.
On an annual basis each partnership will be formally asked in March by the Council's lead officer 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
Audit & Performance Management will manage the rolling programme reviewing existing partnerships with input from relevant Divisions as required. Once an assessment has been made, a report will be prepared for the Audit 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 Executive Committee where appropriate. In this way the Board can consider whether the new partnership is likely to contribute to or complement the work undertaken by the Authority.

<u>KEY PARTNERSHIPS</u>

Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership (TGSE) plus sub groups **(CEX)**
Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) **(CEX)**
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)**
Essex Waste Management Advisory Board **(HES)**
Thames Gateway Area Waste Joint Committee **(HES)**
STAR Partnership **(CPM)**
Ground Work Trust South Essex **(HCS)**
Essex On Line Partnership **(HICS)**

<u>Key</u>
CEX – Chief Executive
CPM – Corporate Policy Manager
HCS – Head of Community Services
HPT – Head of Planning and Transportation
HES – Head of Environmental Services
HICS – Head of Information & Customer Services

<u>Hallmarks of Effective Partnerships</u>

<u>Empowered & Effective Leadership</u>

1. Do you have an effective governance structure that is able to provide strategic leadership for your partnership?

2. Are other bodies and agencies represented as appropriate?

3. Do you have a clear process for reviewing the chair?

4. Do you need a locally elected member with responsibility for the reason for the partnership sitting on this body? If so, who is best placed to fulfil this role?

5. Do you have a clear meeting structure?

6. Do you need any additional protocols to govern processes where there has been confusion or disagreement in the past?

7. Have you ensured that there are actions ascribed to relevant partners?

8. Have you considered ownership of any individual action plans?

9. Within your strategy group, are you able to constructively challenge each other in order to improve performance?

10. Are the right people from the right organisations involved in the partnership?

11. Is the District wide or Sub-District partnership group accountable to a County-wide body?

12. Are the appropriate information and data sharing arrangements in place?

Visible & Constructive Accountability

1. Have you ensured that the information collected from community engagement is included in the partnership plan?

2. Do you have appropriate structures and documents in place to ensure that all community members, including hard to reach and hard to hear communities, can be involved in any community meetings being scheduled?

3. Are the community aware of the community focused meetings being scheduled?

4. Are you taking steps to ensure that the community will receive regular feedback and update on the progress of the community?

5. Are all your partners aware of the existing processes and approaches adopted within agencies to engage and feedback to communities?

6. Are there effective performance management arrangements in place?

7. Does the strategy group consider 'Value for Money' when commissioning and evaluating projects?

8. Do you have a clear idea how effectively your previous partnership plan has been implemented?

9. Do you share the results of your evaluations with others?

Intelligence-led Business Processes

1. Do you have an information sharing protocol?

2. Are there other parties who could sign up to, and comply with, the protocol?

3. Do you share personal data when necessary and appropriate to do so?

4. Do you have all the additional information from partners that you need to build a profile of your community and the community needs that your partnership aims to impact upon?

5. Do you have a process for ensuring that district level priorities are fed into the Local Area Agreement?

6. Have you embedded problem-solving and evaluation processes within your business planning?

7. Are you clear on the priorities for your area, based on what the community thinks and what your information says?

8. Have you made sufficient links with other appropriate strategic assessments in your area?

9. Have you ensured that you have worked together as a partnership to identify those most vulnerable and at risk?

10. Does your plan contain details of how you will measure performance against priorities?

11. Have you ensured that the decisions made have been influenced by the priorities that you have identified and also the ability to deliver?

12. Is there a clear process for allocating tasks and resources to delivery groups and bodies?

13. Do you have a process for weighing up emerging issues with existing priorities?

14. Do you have a process for deciding which projects to evaluate?

15. Have you embedded the need to evaluate within these projects?

16. Have you made resources available to carry out evaluation?

Effective & Responsive Delivery Structures

1. Have you considered how you will resource the delivery of your priorities?

2. Have you maximised the opportunities for the joint delivery of actions?

3. Are you making the best use of other avenues for the publication of your partnership plan?

4. Do you have action groups structured around your key priorities?

5. Are these groups delivering what is required to meet the objectives set out in your partnership plan?

6. Are you able to respond flexibly to emerging issues within the community?

Engaged Communities

1. Does all the information gathered through community consultation feed into your priority- setting activities?

2. Are you targeting your community consultation activities to diverse groups within the community and those most likely to be affected by your priorities?

3. Have you ensured that aspects of the partnership plan can be shared with the community?

4. Have you identified the correct medium for sharing information with the community, including those who are hard to reach and hard to hear?

5. Have you ensured that your partnership plan can be accessed by diverse communities?

6. Are you actively seeking ways to involve diverse groups within your community in problem solving initiatives?

Appropriate Skills & Knowledge

1. Is there a clear understanding amongst all partners of the purpose and aims of the partnership?

2. Is there clarity over the roles and responsibilities of those who make up the partnership?

3. Is there clarity over membership of the partnership, are there any identifiable gaps, and how frequently is the membership reviewed?

4. Does the person facilitating the sharing of information understand the objectives of the partnership and what can be shared and by whom?

5. Do all the partners understand the importance of sharing information?

6. Do you know the make-up of the communities you represent, including the groups and organisations within it?

7. Do you have adequate processes in place for listening to all sections of the community, including minority and hard to reach groups?

8. Do you understand the new requirements and what they mean for the partnership?

9. Have you ensured that there are people within the partnership who can review the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the partnerships work?

10. Is there the analytical capacity/capability across the partnership to support its work?

11. Do you know that the messages of the partnership are reaching the intended audience?

12. Are you familiar with the planning processes and the links to other areas of partnership business?

13. Do you understand the various problem solving models and how they can be applied to the business of the partnership?

14. Do you have a process for learning from previous evaluations?

15. Do you understand what makes a good evaluation?

<u>Questions for New Partnerships</u>

- 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/liabilities 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?
- What arrangements have been made for partnership employed staff?