

**PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK  
(Report by Head of Policy)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of a framework that will be used to evaluate the partnerships in which the Council has an involvement in.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Increasingly the council is seeking to promote joint working and partnership to deliver local objectives.
- 2.2 This experience is consistent with Government thinking; specifically the Comprehensive Performance Assessment places increasing emphasis on the Council's partnership 'performance'. The Use of Resources Judgement 2006 and the Direction of Travel Assessment both highlight partnership evaluation and regular review as a requirement that needs to be delivered by the Council.
- 2.3 The attached framework has been compiled using best practice and it is envisaged that it will be developed and improved following the initial evaluations of existing partnerships.
- 2.4 Many funding sources now can only be accessed by those who can demonstrate effective partnership working and the use of the framework will help attempts to access such funding.

**3. THE PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK**

- 3.1 For the purpose of the framework the definition of partnership is '*an agreement between two or more bodies to work collectively to achieve an objective*'. Partnerships vary in importance, size, service area, membership and function. The attached framework details the differences between strategic and service or operational partnerships and sets out key features and benefits of partnership working.
- 3.2 The framework includes a 'health check' with a series of questions that need to be addressed and will be used to evaluate each partnership. An assessment of 'value' to the Council will be determined in relation to how each partnership meets the health check criterion. Questions shown in bold on the 'health check' represent important criteria which must be in place if the partnership is to be effective.

#### **4. IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 The Council will compile a partnership register that will detail all of the partnerships that it is involved in/has membership of. This will be used to determine a programme of review.
- 4.2 Initially the most significant/strategic partnerships (around 20) will be reviewed.
- 4.4 Eventually, each Partnership included on the register will be required to complete the 'partnership 'health check'.
- 4.5 The Partnership health checks will be evaluated and each partnership will be 'scored' using the criteria detailed in the attached framework. Risks will be reviewed and recorded by the Internal Audit service on the partnership risk register
- 4.6 Periodic reports will be submitted to Cabinet following the evaluation exercises.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Cabinet approves the Partnership framework and note that the results of the evaluations will be reviewed and reported in due course.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Huntingdonshire District Council's Use of Resources 2006 (HDC 2006)

Governing Partnerships, Bridging the Accountability Gap (Audit Commission 2005)

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## Partnership Framework

### 1. Why does the Council need a Partnership Framework ?

- 1.1 Partnerships can help to deliver improvements in the Quality of life of local people and are becoming a significant feature of public services. Partnerships can bring significant benefits; they provide a response to the complex and multi-faceted problems and demands of our communities that cannot be tackled effectively by an individual organisation working alone.
- 1.2 Partnerships can provide flexibility, innovation and additional resources but they also bring risks; working across organisational boundaries can bring complexity and ambiguity that can generate confusion and weaken accountability.
- 1.3 The public needs assurance that their money is spent wisely in partnerships and it should be confident that its quality of life will improve as a result of this form of working.
- 1.4 Huntingdonshire District Council supports joint working to improve service delivery and the quality of people's lives and this framework is designed to help the Council evaluate a partnership's performance and show whether or not the partnership is contributing to the quality of local services and ultimately the resident's quality of life.

### 2. What is a Partnership?

- 2.1 For the purpose of this framework, the definition of partnership is an agreement between two or more organisations to work together to achieve an agreed objective.
- 2.2 Partnerships vary in size, purpose, membership and function. There are two groups of Partnership:-
  - Partnerships to deliver services directly through working with other councils, agencies, the voluntary sector and businesses
  - Strategic partnerships with key stakeholders and partners where collaboration is sought because of legislative drivers to tackle issues such as community safety or where agencies working together can bring improved co-ordination targeting or bidding for resources or influence to bear on other agencies

*For the purpose of this framework it is intended to exclude commercial partnerships which would normally be created through a contract or agreement for the delivery of goods and services*

### 3. Partnership Features

- 3.1 A successful partnership is characterised by:-
  - being inclusive and focused on an agreed objective(s)
  - helping to deliver the challenges identified in the Council's corporate plan
  - having clearly defined governance arrangements
  - demonstrating added value
  - having clear sustainability/termination arrangements
  - using resources effectively

#### 4. 'Partnership Health Check'

Working in partnership can often bring benefits and complex risks. To avoid potential problems and keep a partnership running smoothly, a common framework and language that everyone understands is needed. This 'health check' will raise a series of questions that each organisation involved in a partnership should address. The completed health check will provide a basis for further evaluation and risk assessment.

Name of Partnership:	
Membership:	
Resources committed by HDC:	
<b>Rationale</b>	
<b>Why does this partnership exist?</b>	
<b>What are its agreed objectives?</b>	
Where have the aims been published?	
Can you now identify a better way of achieving the objectives?	
<b>Added value from the Partnership</b>	
How does this partnership add value?	
How do you demonstrate this added value?	
How do you know whether funds are being well spent?	
How does the public know that partnership funds are being well spent?	
<b>Governance arrangements</b>	
How do the partnership's corporate governance arrangements link to those of individual partners?	
How are decisions made?	
How are decisions recorded?	
Who makes sure that decisions are acted on?	
Who scrutinises decisions?	
To who are decisions reported?	
<b>Performance Management</b>	
<b>How do you know which partnership targets you are meeting and which</b>	

<b>you are failing to meet?</b>	
<b>How do the objectives and targets of the partnership link to the Council's aims and objectives</b>	
Who manages and reports progress?	
Does the Partnership share data? If yes, Does the partnership have systems in place to check the legality, quality and confidentiality of the data provided?	
<b>Financial Management</b>	
Who provides the money?	
Who decides how to spend it?	
Can the money be reallocated?	
What are the financial reporting arrangements?	
<b>Risk Management</b>	
<b>What impact do the objectives of the partnership have on the Councils objectives?</b>	
How do you know when things are going wrong?	
Who can take action when things are going wrong?	
How do you resolve conflicts?	
<b>What is the likelihood of failure of the partnership?</b>	
<b>Sustainability/Termination Arrangements</b>	
What are the arrangements if this partnership comes to an end/if a partner decides to be no longer involved? What are the long term arrangements for the partnership to continue meeting its objectives?	
How will resources be reallocated back to partners? Or be sustained to continue the work of the partnership?	
<b>Serving the Public</b>	
How effectively does this partnership communicate with stakeholders and the public?	
How can the public and service users obtain redress when things go wrong?	
Is there a complaints and suggestions process the public can use?	

## 5. Evaluation

- 5.1 Each Partnership will be scored in terms of its value to the Council. The 'health check' will answer the following key questions
- **Financial implications – what money/resources/people are being put in? and how are these balanced against outcomes?**

- **Does the Partnership have clear objectives/aims/targets and are these being met?**
- **Do the objectives/aims/targets link to the Councils corporate aims and objectives?**
- **What impact do the objectives of the partnership have on the Councils objectives?**

5.2 Each partnership will 'scored' using the criteria in the table below:-

	Score
<p>The partnership has clear objectives that are being achieved through regular target review.</p> <p>Outcomes link well to the Council's objectives</p> <p>On balance the Council is meeting its aims and objectives, taking into account the amount of resources it has allocated to the partnership.</p>	4
<p>The partnership has clear objectives that are being achieved</p> <p>There is some linkage to the Council's aims and objectives</p> <p>On balance the Council is meeting its aims and objectives, taking into account the amount of resources allocated to the partnership</p>	3
<p>The Partnership has an objective and some outcome targets Limited evidence of review of achievement of objectives</p> <p>Some evidence of links to the Council's aims and objectives</p> <p>On balance the partnership outcomes are not fully helping to meet the aims and objectives of the Council.</p>	2
<p>No evidence of clear and recorded partnership objectives therefore no evidence of review</p> <p>No evidence of links to the Council's aims and objectives</p> <p>Little or no evidence that the Council is achieving outcomes given the amount of resources allocated</p>	1