
ANNUAL REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT PARTNERSHIPS 2011 - 2012

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Steve Harker
Efficiency and Resources Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of People

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To present the outcome of the annual review of significant partnerships to enable Cabinet to consider the partnerships that the Council is involved with and to ensure that they have adequate governance arrangements in place in light of the changes to partnerships in Darlington reported to Cabinet in March 2012.

Summary

2. Through the partnership toolkit, Darlington Borough Council (DBC) has an established approach to monitoring the significant partnerships it is involved with. As a result there are good governance arrangements in place for these partnerships. The partnerships are delivering well against their objectives. The toolkit has been effective in identifying high level concerns of the significant partnerships, the most common of which are levels of resourcing, uncertainty as a result of emerging policy and fundamental changes in operating landscape.

Recommendation

3. It is recommended that Cabinet endorse the review of significant partnerships and note the actions being taken to address outstanding issues.

Reasons

4. The recommendations are supported:-
 - (a) to enhance corporate governance arrangements in significant partnerships;
 - (b) to enhance the relevance and performance of partnerships in Darlington.

**Murray Rose,
Director of People**

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Background Papers

- (i) Audit Commission Report – Governing Partnerships – Bridging the Accountability Gap
- (ii) Completed Partnership Toolkit Questionnaires
- (iii) Partnership Working Toolkit Report to Cabinet 20 March 2007
- (iv) Partnership Annual Review Forms – Year Ended 31 March 2012
- (v) Changes to Partnerships in Darlington Report to Cabinet 6 March 2012

S17 Crime and Disorder	The Darlington Partnership and Community Safety Partnership have been key partnerships in ensuring that Safer Darlington is delivered which includes reduction of crime and disorder as a main priority
Health and Well Being	The Darlington Partnership, Healthy Darlington and Children’s Trust have been key partnerships in ensuring that Healthy Darlington is delivered to improve all aspects of the health and well-being of people in Darlington.
Carbon Impact	The Darlington Partnership, Greener Darlington and Prosperous Darlington have been key partnerships in ensuring the environmental and economic sustainability of Darlington are assured.
Diversity	The Darlington Partnership and all of its component themed groups have One Darlington as a key priority which includes ensuring diversity is accepted as a priority inherent in all planning and delivery.
Wards Affected	All wards
Groups Affected	All groups
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not recommend a change to the Council’s budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The Darlington Partnership and its delivery themes have highest level responsibility for ensuring the delivery of One Darlington : Perfectly Placed
Efficiency	Partnerships that the Council is involved in are reviewed annually to consider outcomes delivered and resources expended.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. Public bodies have responsibilities in respect of their partnership arrangements in that they should for example:
 - (a) know the partnership they are involved in and how much money and other resources they invest in them;
 - (b) take hard decisions to scale down their involvement in partnerships if the costs outweigh the benefits, or if the added risks cannot be managed properly, and;
 - (c) agree and regularly review protocols and governing documents with all partners.
6. These are responsibilities that were tested previously through the Comprehensive Area Assessment with a number of relevant Key Lines of Enquiry under the 'Use of Resources' assessment. Though this inspection regime has now been abolished by the Coalition Government, it remains important that the Council can demonstrate it is discharging its responsibilities with respect to value for money within partnerships.
7. In order to better demonstrate fulfilment of responsibilities, Cabinet adopted a partnership toolkit in March 2007 (Min C174/March/07 refers). The toolkit content is refreshed annually to ensure that it remains relevant and it provides a means to record that the performance of each partnership is monitored and that adequate governance arrangements are in place. The toolkit identifies partnerships currently classed as 'significant' in accordance with the definition reported to Cabinet in March 2007.
8. The methodology adopted in Darlington involves the application of the Partnership Toolkit Questionnaire which then automatically prepares an action plan to address areas for improvement in governance arrangements. The results of this process form the basis of this report. The lead officers play a key and continuing role in ensuring the good governance of the partnerships. Outstanding actions from last years review have been addressed or are in hand.

Criteria For A Partnership To Be Classed As 'Significant':

9. A partnership is determined to be significant if:
 - (a) DBC has a statutory duty or other government requirement to enter into the partnership; or
 - (b) It is a major contributor towards achieving the Sustainable Community Strategy objectives; or
 - (c) It is a major contributor towards improving the lives of children and young people or older people; or
 - (d) Takes a lead on setting the Council's policy framework; or
 - (e) DBC has the role of accountable body/lead agency and the annual expenditure of the partnership is more than £100,000; or
 - (f) DBC funds the partnership by more than £100,000 annually.

10. The partnerships identified as significant in accordance with this definition for 2011/12 are as follows:
- (a) Community Safety Partnership
 - (b) Children's Trust
 - (c) Drug and Alcohol Action Team
 - (d) Greener Darlington
 - (e) Joint Strategic Commissioning Group
 - (f) Darlington Safeguarding Children Board
 - (g) Healthy Darlington
 - (h) Tees Valley Unlimited
 - (i) Darlington Partnership Board
 - (j) Prosperous Darlington
 - (k) Darlington Safeguarding Adults Board
 - (l) Older Persons Partnership Board
 - (m) Learning Disability Partnership Board
 - (n) 14 - 19 Partnership (now 11 – 19)
 - (o) Community Advice Partnership
 - (p) Community Sports Network
 - (q) Youth Offending Service
 - (r) Formative Health and Wellbeing Board
 - (s) Mental Health Partnership Board

Review of Darlington Partnership and partnership working in Darlington

11. At its meeting of 14 September 2011 Darlington Partnership Board agreed a proposed new structure and a revised focus for the work that it carries out (reported to Cabinet – 6 March 2012 – Min C137/March/12 refers). As part of the review it was agreed that current theme groups be discontinued as follows:
- (a) Safer Darlington
 - (b) Aspiring Darlington
 - (c) Greener Darlington
 - (d) Healthy Darlington
 - (e) Prosperous Darlington
12. The broader ambition of the review will enable the Council to rationalise and better coordinate the partnership working that it is involved with which will be a focus of 2012-13. The Partnership Toolkit will continue to play a pivotal role in this exercise in ensuring that adequate governance arrangements are in place.
13. New partnership arrangements are being established for how the Council and other public sector agencies work together. Where appropriate, new partnerships will be assessed against the Partnership Toolkit.

Performance and Governance of Partnerships 2011-12

14. An Annual Review proforma is completed by the relevant Council officer for each partnership. These are used to assess achievements against objectives, identify any areas for improvement or risk. This report gives a summary of specific remedial actions required by

each significant partnership to achieve full compliance with the Council's governance requirements. In addition, the reports identify what Council resources, if any, are being used to support the partnerships. These are readily available and published on the intranet at:

<http://intranet/Resources/Finance/CorporateAssurance/Risk/riskmanagement/Partnerships.htm>

15. All of the partnerships have evidenced good performance towards identified objectives for 2011/12 and have established revised objectives for 2012/13.
16. Generally, partnerships are complying with the governance requirements covered by the toolkit. However, many of the partnership have been included within the major review of partnership working in Darlington. Although ensuring continued effective governance arrangements are in place, the main focus was on delivering outcomes, and outstanding actions would be addressed under the new Partnership structure during 2012/13.
17. Issues identified that have potential implications for the operation of the partnerships are as follows:
 - (a) Drug and Alcohol Action Team report significant cuts in direct government grant leading to reduced capacity. An action plan including restructuring has been outlined to address the issue.
 - (b) The Joint Strategic Commissioning Group's local governance and reporting arrangements will be developed to align with the public sector group of Darlington Partnership and the Darlington Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board.
 - (c) Financial contributions from Partner agencies to the Safeguarding Adults Board are currently under review and will be reflected in a new business plan.
 - (d) Financial reporting mechanisms have been a concern to the Community Advice Partnership. Financial management reporting is now a standing item on each agenda. An exit strategy is in development.
 - (e) The Community Sports Network report potential difficulties in resourcing their newly written strategy. They are addressing this by exploring new ways of working.
 - (f) The Youth Offending Service have highlighted concerns regarding performance reporting mechanisms introduced by central government which uses data from previous years as opposed to the 'real time' data sourced from the Council. These concerns are being considered by the Youth Justice Board Executive.
18. The position on the issues raised will continue to be monitored by the relevant partnership lead officers.

Outcome of Consultation

19. Consultation with the chairs and lead officers of the key partnerships was undertaken in the production of this report. In addition the Review of Darlington Partnership has been widely consulted on and reported to Cabinet.