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**ANNUAL REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT PARTNERSHIPS**

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**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Stephen Harker, Resources Portfolio**

**Responsible Director – Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To present the outcome of the second annual review of significant partnerships led by the Chief Executive of Darlington Partnership and based upon partnership toolkit questionnaires completed by the Council's partnership lead officers.

**Summary**

2. In October 2005 the Audit Commission published a report entitled *Governing Partnerships: Bridging the Accountability Gap*. The Audit Commission were unequivocal about the responsibilities of public bodies in respect of their partnership arrangements in that they should for example:
  - (a) Know the partnerships 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;
  - (c) Agree and regularly review protocols and governing documents with all partners.
3. These are responsibilities that are tested though Comprehensive Performance Assessment with a number of relevant Key Lines of Enquiry under the 'Use of Resources' assessment.
4. In order to better demonstrate fulfilment of responsibilities, Cabinet adopted a partnership toolkit in March 2007 (Min C174/March/07 refers). The toolkit 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 classed as 'significant' in accordance with the definition reported to Cabinet in March 2007.
5. Timescales for achieving full compliance with the governance requirements covered by the toolkit are that the LSP and its five delivery themed groups will be compliant by 31 March 2009. At the time of compiling the report, the LSP and four out of five delivery themes are fully compliant and the fifth themed group will achieve full compliance by March 2009.

6. As the non-LSP significant partnerships are new additions to this process they are reported in summary only. It is expected that they will all, also achieve full compliance by March 2009.

### **Recommendation**

7. It is recommended that the report be noted.

### **Reasons**

8. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons :-
  - (a) To enhance corporate governance arrangements in significant partnerships;
  - (b) To enhance the relevance and performance of partnerships in Darlington in anticipation of Comprehensive Area Assessments.

**Lorraine O'Donnell**  
**Assistant Chief Executive**

### **Background Papers**

- (i) Audit Commission Report – Governing Partnerships – Bridging the Accountability Gap
- (ii) Use of Resources KLOE
- (iii) Completed Partnership Toolkit Questionnaires
- (iv) Partnership Working Toolkit Report to Cabinet 20 March 2007

Steve Rose : Extension x3772

S17 Crime and Disorder	The LSP and CDRP are 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 LSP, Healthy Darlington and Children's Trust are key partnerships in ensuring that Healthy Darlington is delivered to improve all aspects of the health and well-being of people in Darlington.
Sustainability	The LSP, Greener Darlington and Prosperous Darlington are key partnerships in ensuring the environmental and economic sustainability of Darlington are assured.
Diversity	The LSP 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 LSP and its delivery themes have highest level responsibility for ensuring the delivery of One Darlington : Perfectly Placed

## MAIN REPORT

### Purpose of Report

9. To present the outcome of the second annual review of significant partnerships led by the Chief Executive of Darlington Partnership and based upon partnership toolkit questionnaires completed by the Council's partnership lead officers.

### Background

10. In October 2005 the Audit Commission published a report entitled *Governing Partnerships: Bridging the Accountability Gap*. The Audit Commission were unequivocal about the responsibilities of public bodies in respect of their partnership arrangements in that they should for example:
  - (a) Know the partnerships 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;
  - (c) Agree and regularly review protocols and governing documents with all partners.
11. These are responsibilities that are tested through Comprehensive Performance Assessment with a number of relevant Key Lines of enquiry under the 'Use of Resources' assessment.
12. In order to better demonstrate fulfilment of responsibilities, Cabinet adopted a partnership toolkit in March 2007 (Min C174/March/07 refers). The toolkit provides a means to record that the performance of each partnership is monitored and that adequate governance arrangements are in place. The toolkit is in electronic format and comprises an on-line questionnaire to be completed for each partnership. This was used in the production of the first report made to Cabinet in September 2007. There has been significant subsequent development of the toolkit during 2008 undertaken by the Corporate Assurance Division. This development will continue in order to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.
13. This report is made later in the year than the previous report for two clear reasons. Firstly the LSP has seen a major redevelopment of its structures in order to be best placed to deliver the newly published sustainable community strategy One Darlington : Perfectly Placed. This restructuring was implemented from July 2008 and has necessitated revised governance arrangements which are now in place or nearing completion. Secondly, the further roll-out of the partnership toolkit has identified further partnerships classed as significant and others may be identified in the future. This report maps the progress of these partnerships towards addressing the governance requirements covered by the toolkit.
14. The Corporate Assurance Division has worked with DBC Partnership Lead Officers to apply the toolkit to each partnership. The toolkit itself identifies partnerships classed as 'significant' in accordance with the definition reported to Cabinet in March 2007 (**Appendix A**). Under these criteria the following existing partnerships are assessed as 'significant':

#### **The LSP and its Themed Groups:**

- (a) Darlington Partnership (the LSP)
- (b) Children's Trust

- (c) Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
- (d) Greener Darlington (new in 2008)
- (e) Healthy Darlington (evolved from Health Improvement & Social Inclusion Group)
- (f) Prosperous Darlington (evolved from Economy, Environment & Transport Group)

**Other Partnerships:**

- (g) Tees Valley Unlimited
- (h) Supporting People Partnership
- (i) Learning Disability Partnership Board
- (j) Mental Health Partnership Board
- (k) Older Partnership Board
- (l) Safeguarding Children Board
- (m) Safeguarding Adults Board
- (n) Drug & Alcohol Action Team
- (o) Darlington Youth Offending Service

15. As the non-LSP significant partnerships are new additions to this process they are reported in summary only. It is expected that they will all achieve full compliance with governance requirements by March 2009.

**Detail of the Monitoring Governance and Performance of Partnerships**

16. The guidance contained in the Audit Commission's Report *Governing Partnerships: Bridging the Accountability Gap* expected a systematic approach to ensuring that partnerships have strong governance arrangements and that they are working towards achieving their objectives. The intrinsic quality of each partnership is the responsibility of that group to ensure that goals are being met through a methodical, creative and inclusive process. When establishing the partnership its governing principles should be captured in a partnership agreement that includes the means by which the performance is monitored as well as the setting and achievement of objectives. Each individual partner also has a responsibility to their own agency to ensure that the partnership is meeting their corporate objectives and that, by being a part of the partnership, they are adding value to their own organisational goals.
17. For Darlington Borough Council there is a dual role in ensuring that both aspects of monitoring are fulfilled. In its community leadership role the council has a duty to ensure the smooth running of a partnership in which it is involved and that the partnership is reaching its objectives. It also has responsibility to ensure that the partnership is meeting corporate goals as well as ensuring that resources agreed for the partnership are being used in the best way and with probity.
18. 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.

## **Performance and Governance of Partnerships 2007-08**

19. A summary of the performance and governance of each of the key partnerships for the year 2007-08 is described below. In all cases this is taken beyond the financial year end to the current position as this gives greater clarity to the monitoring of performance. Each case reflects responses to the toolkit methodology by DBC Partnership Lead Officers. The report gives a summary of specific remedial actions required by each key partnership to achieve the requisite level of governance.

### **The LSP and its Themed Groups**

#### **Darlington Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership)**

##### **Overview**

20. Darlington Partnership has seen significant change in the period 2007-08 due to the new demands being made on all LSPs. In particular the development of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed as the sustainable community strategy and the incorporation of a new local area agreement with measurement against the national indicators has seen a significant shift in working practice. The establishment of an Executive Group to ensure business is being conducted effectively across the partnership has created new demands on governance all of which have been resolved through extensive discussion amongst partners and is encapsulated within the new Constitution for the LSP which was formally implemented in September 2008.
21. Throughout this process Darlington Partnership has managed to maintain a high profile as the means by which the different sectors can meet and agree joint action against priorities. The year has also seen the continued delivery of a well-received pilot LAA which focuses on Children & Young People.
22. All meetings and events continue to be well attended. The secretariat reliance on using resources from key partners, especially the Council, has meant that activity levels have been maintained.
23. The Chair of the LSP is Alasdair MacConachie, Managing Director of the Sherwoods Group. Chief Executive of Darlington Partnership is Steve Rose. The Lead Officer for DBC is Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive.

##### **Performance against objectives 2007-08**

- (a) Develop a new sustainable community strategy (SCS) for Darlington as well as a delivery plan – the local area agreement (LAA) – Achieved with the publication of the SCS & LAA in June 2008;
- (b) Develop LSP structures to deliver the SCS & LAA through Partnership working. Achieved with new structures agreed and implemented;
- (c) Ensure positive relationships are maintained through a variety of events and other activities. Achieved – a full programme of LSP events for the period is available for inspection if necessary;

- (d) Continue the delivery of the Phase Two pilot LAA – through a multi-agency steering group chaired by the Chief Executive of DBC. Achieved – the pilot LAA comes to an end in March 2009. Exit strategy planning is now well advanced and lessons learned and successful interventions are being considered within mainstream service planning and the development of the new LAA;
- (e) Ensure that the LSP and LAA meet the best practice requirements of government. Achieved and acknowledged by Government Office for the North East.
- (f) Fulfil all governance requirements for DBC by December 2008. Achieved – the final actions were to agree risk management procedures which were approved by the LSP on November 12 2008.

### **DBC Resources**

- 24. Darlington Borough Council contributes £45k towards the running costs of the secretariat and the equivalent of 3 FTE staff from those attending LSP meetings, supporting the process including performance management and policy development.

### **Objectives for 2008-09**

- (a) Deliver the SCS and LAA;
- (b) Ensure the structures of the LSP meet the demands of the new SCS;
- (c) Ensure that the separate priorities of One Darlington and Perfectly Placed are embedded across the planning for all LSP partners

### **Governance Arrangements:**

- 25. A new Constitution was agreed by the LSP in September 2008 having been approved by DBC Legal Services .
- 26. Risks are managed under the auspices of DBC’s Risk Management guidelines by the Chief Executive of Darlington Partnership and the Assistant Chief Executive of DBC. The risk register and associated action plan for the current year were approved by the LSP on 12 November 2008.
- 27. The risks are being managed through the new executive Group which then reports to the LSP. The current status of all potential risks is that they are being managed within the appetite of all partners.

### **Partnership Toolkit - Governance Improvement Action Plan**

- 28. There are no outstanding actions

### **Children’s Trust**

#### **Overview**

- 29. The Children’s Trust is a statutory body established in September 2006 initially chaired by the DBC Director of Children’s Services. In March 2008 the DBC lead member for Children’s Services became the chair of the Trust.

30. During the course of the year the Children's Trust has developed the Children and Young People's Plan for Darlington. This is a comprehensive plan that covers all elements of both Every Child Matters and the priorities of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. The Children's Trust has responsibility for overseeing the delivery of Aspiring Darlington within the LSP and has developed performance and delivery mechanisms to ensure this is successful.
31. In order to deliver its objectives the Children's Trust has organized itself around an effective set of sub-groups that are clear in their remit and expected outcomes. This includes linkage to all other Themed Groups of the LSP.
32. The Chair of the Children's Trust is Councillor Chris McEwan, DBC Lead Member for Children's Services. The Lead Officer is Julian Kenshole.

### **Performance against objectives, 2007-08**

- (a) Develop a Children & Young People's Plan – achieved and published September 2008;
- (b) Establish delivery and performance management for Aspiring Darlington – Achieved with report received by LSP Executive Group on 3 November 2008;
- (c) Incorporate all governance arrangements required by DBC by March 2009 – Achieved.

### **DBC Resources**

33. The equivalent of 3 FTE staff are deployed by DBC in the Children's Trust – this includes the Lead Officer time and other officers attending meetings.

### **Objectives for 2008-09**

- (a) Deliver the Children and Young People's Plan;
- (b) Deliver Aspiring Darlington
- (c) Continue to develop the Children's Trust as a multi-agency strategic body
- (d) Deliver better outcomes for young people in Darlington.

### **Governance Arrangements:**

34. Terms of reference have been agreed and approved by DBC Legal Services.
35. A risk log has been presented to the Children's Trust using agreed methodology and shows no issues that need reporting to Cabinet.

### **Partnership Toolkit - Governance Improvement Action Plan**

36. There are no outstanding actions.

### **Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP)**



## **Overview**

37. The CDRP is a statutory body that has successfully evolved its structures over the past year. The resulting structure sees a full CDRP comprising around 70 stakeholders meeting for a full day once a year in order to scrutinise activity and performance. A core Executive Group oversees the activities of a series of Business, tasking, co-ordination and operational Teams.
38. The CDRP is responsible for ensuring that government crime targets are being met in Darlington and ensures interventions are in place to address priority issues. The CDRP has been commended by Home office ministers on a number of occasions.
39. The Chair of the CDRP is Chief Superintendent Carole Thompson. The lead officer is Rob Jones.

### **Performance against objectives:**

- (a) Develop Community Safety Plan. Achieved – adopted June 2008
- (b) Developed delivery plan for Safer Darlington. Achieved – draft plan received by LSP Executive Group 3 November 2008;
- (c) Maintain engagement of partners in meetings and delivery. Achieved.

### **DBC Resources**

40. There are 3 FTE officers in the CDRP secretariat funded jointly by DBC and the Home Office – DBC contribution is around £80k.

### **Objectives for 2008-09**

- (a) Deliver the Community Safety Plan;
- (b) Deliver Safer Darlington;
- (c) Maintain engagement of partners in delivery.

### **Governance Arrangements:**

41. The CDRP has clear and agreed Terms of Reference and governance arrangements approved by DBC Legal Services and the Home Office.
42. A full risk assessment showed no significant risks that need to be reported to Cabinet

### **Partnership Toolkit - Governance Improvement Action Plan**

43. No outstanding actions

## **Greener Darlington**

### **Overview**

44. Greener Darlington is a new group formed to deliver the Greener Darlington element of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. It was formally constituted in September 2008 and has established governance procedures to sit alongside its new membership and delivery planning procedures.

45. The Chair of Greener Darlington is Kate Culverhouse, Acting Regional Director for Groundwork North East. The lead Officer is Steve Petch.

#### **Performance against objectives 2007-08**

46. Not applicable, as a new group the partnership did not have objectives for 07/08.

#### **DBC Resources**

47. There is 0.5 full-time equivalent of staff time used by DBC in the secretariat and attendance of this partnership.

#### **Objectives for 2008-09**

- (a) Deliver Greener Darlington
- (b) Embed the new group into the LSP
- (c) Engage a wide set of partners in the meetings and delivery of Greener Darlington

#### **Governance Arrangements**

48. All of the governance requirements covered by the Partnership Toolkit have been addressed. Risks to the delivery of Greener Darlington have been identified and there were none that need to be reported to Cabinet.

#### **Partnership Toolkit - Governance Improvement Action Plan**

49. No outstanding actions

#### **Healthy Darlington**

##### **Overview**

50. Healthy Darlington is a new group formed to deliver the Healthy Darlington element of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed.
51. The Chair of Healthy Darlington is Miriam Davidson, Locality Director of Public Health for Darlington. The lead Officer is Ken Ross, NHS Darlington

#### **Performance against objectives 2007-08**

52. Not applicable, as a new group the partnership did not have objectives for 07/08.

#### **DBC Resources**

53. There is 0.5 full-time equivalent of staff time used by DBC in the secretariat and attendance of this partnership.

#### **Objectives for 2008-09**

- (a) Deliver Prosperous Darlington
- (b) Embed the new group into the LSP
- (c) Engage a wide set of partners in the meetings and delivery of Prosperous Darlington

### **Governance Arrangements**

- 54. The partnership was formally constituted in September 2008 and has established governance procedures and risk management to sit alongside its new membership and delivery planning procedures.
- 55. Risks to the delivery of Healthy Darlington have been identified and there were none that need to be reported to Cabinet.

### **Partnership Toolkit - Governance Improvement Action Plan**

- 56. No outstanding actions

### **Prosperous Darlington**

#### **Overview**

- 57. Prosperous Darlington is a new group formed to deliver the Prosperous Darlington element of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed.
- 58. The Chair of Prosperous Darlington is Mike Airey, Barclays Bank PLC. The lead Officer is Gwenda Lyn Jones.

#### **Performance against objectives**

- 59. Not applicable, as a new group the partnership did not have objectives for 07/08.

#### **DBC Resources**

- 60. There is 0.25 full-time equivalent of staff time used by DBC in the attendance of this partnership.

#### **Objectives for 2008-09**

- (a) Deliver Prosperous Darlington
- (b) Embed the new group into the LSP
- (c) Engage a wide set of partners in the meetings and delivery of Prosperous Darlington

### **Governance Arrangements**

- 61. See paragraphs 62 and 63 below.

### **Partnership Toolkit - Governance Improvement Action Plan**

62. There are a number of outstanding issues to be addressed e.g. Terms of Reference need agreement; the partnership requires a constitution or a written agreement on how to reach decisions; and a Risk Management methodology to be agreed by the partnership etc.
63. However, much of the documentation has been drafted and is subject to the approval of the Partnership Board at their meeting on 15th January 2009.

### **Exit strategies for former significant partnerships under the LSP**

64. The previous significant partnerships under the auspices of the LSP namely Economy, Environment & Transport Group, Health Improvement & Social Inclusion Group and the Learning & Culture Partnership were all terminated by July 2008 under the new provisions of the LSP agreed at the meeting of 5 March 2008. Their functions as being responsible for delivering the former Community Strategy came to an end with the adoption of One Darlington: Perfectly Placed. There is no identified risk to DBC with the end of these partnerships. None of these partnerships held assets or employed staff.

### **Other Significant Partnerships**

65. Paragraph 13 identifies that other partnerships in Darlington have now been identified that meet the 'significant' criteria.
66. A summary of these partnerships together with the number of outstanding governance improvement actions is as follows:

<b>Partnership</b>	<b>Reason for forming</b>	<b>Chair (DBC unless otherwise stated)</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Number of governance actions to complete</b>
Tees Valley Unlimited	Tees Valley Strategy	Hugh Lang, DTV Airport	John Simpson	3
Supporting People Partnership	Statutory obligation/ condition of funding (ABG)	Cliff Brown	Anthony Sandys	6
Learning Disability Partnership Board	Statutory obligation	Cliff Brown	Maxine Naismith	0
Mental Health Partnership Board	Statutory obligation	Sue Dixon, PCT	Maxine Naismith	4
Older Persons Partnership Board	Need identified locally	Colin Morris, PCT	Warren Tweed	4
Safeguarding Children Board	Statutory obligation	Jenny Cooke	Odette Sanderson	3
Safeguarding Adults Board	Statutory obligation	Jane Robinson	Jane Robinson	4
Drug & Alcohol Action Team	Statutory obligation	Cllr. Bill Dixon	Kate Martin	7
Darlington Youth Offending Service	Statutory obligation	Ada Burns	Rita Taylor	6

67. There are a number of common themes to the governance improvements required such as a constitution or written agreement on how to reach decisions; a risk management methodology to be adopted and implemented by the partnership; and formal rights of access for Internal Audit to be granted.
68. Lead officers are working towards delivering the improvement required that are expected to be completed by the end of March 2009. A more detailed report on these partnerships will be incorporated in next years Annual Review of Significant Partnerships.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

69. Consultation with the chairs and lead officers of the key partnerships was undertaken in the production of this report.

**Lorraine O'Donnell**  
**Assistant Chief Executive**

## Appendix A

Criteria for a partnership to be classed as 'significant:

“A partnership will be determined to be significant if:

- DBC has a statutory duty or other government requirement to enter into the partnership;

or

- It is a major contributor towards achieving the (Sustainable) Community Strategy objectives;

or

- It is a major contributor towards improving the lives of children and young people or older people;

or

- Takes a lead on setting the Council's policy framework;

or

- DBC has the role of accountable body/lead agency and the annual expenditure of the partnership is more than £100,000;

or

- DBC funds the partnership by more than £100,000 annually”