
PARTNERSHIP WORKING TOOLKIT

Responsible Cabinet Member - Councillor Don Bristow, Resource Management Portfolio

**Responsible Directors – Paul Wildsmith, Director of Corporate Services;
Lorraine O’Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive.**

Purpose of Report

1. To propose the adoption and implementation of a partnership toolkit.

Information and Analysis

2. In a changing policy landscape and with an increasing emphasis on the role of partnership working in local government, there are a number of drivers for planning and monitoring the Council’s involvement in partnerships. In particular, the Audit Commission (in “Governing Partnerships: Bridging the Accountability Gap”) observes that partnerships bring risks as well as opportunities, that governance can be problematic and that they may not always be good value for money. The Audit Commission are unequivocal about the responsibilities of public bodies in respect of their partnership arrangements. Public bodies should:
 - (a) know the partnerships they are involved in, and how much money and other resources they invest in them;
 - (b) establish clear criteria against which partnerships can be evaluated;
 - (c) 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;
 - (d) agree and regularly review protocols and governing documents with all partners;
 - (e) tell service users and the wider public about how key partnerships work.
3. 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) and which the Council will be able to better fulfil through the adoption and implementation of the proposed partnership toolkit. The Council does this with an awareness that some of our partners require us to keep bureaucracy to a minimum.
4. The toolkit will provide a means to ensure that:
 - (a) the council’s resources are effectively employed;
 - (b) the performance of each partnership is monitored;
 - (c) adequate governance arrangements are in place.

Context

5. This electronic toolkit has been developed out of a paper version which was piloted by the Chief Executive of Darlington Partnership with some significant partnerships during Summer/ Autumn 2006 (Darlington Partnership (LSP), The Health Improvement and Social Inclusion Group (HISIG) and the Economy Environment and Transport Group). The pilot was also originally intended to be applied to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Learning Partnership, however both have recently evolved into new partnerships and are therefore being established in line with the toolkit rather than being subject to the review process.
6. This pilot project sparked debate at the Health Improvement and Social Inclusion Group and suggestions for improvement were made by the LSP Chief Executive. Together with additional learning from other councils and the expertise of a small officer working group, this feedback has been used to inform the development of the toolkit. It is felt that making the kit available in an electronic format will facilitate ease of access and use.

Definition of partnerships and significant partnerships

7. It is proposed that as part of the toolkit, the Council adopts a clear definition of a partnership. This definition is the one used by the Audit Commission, “An agreement between two or more independent bodies to work collectively to achieve an objective”. The scope is therefore very wide, but for clarification this definition, as per the Audit Commission, does not apply to partnering arrangements such as public private partnerships, procurement partnerships and PFI contracts.
8. Several of the Use of Resources Key Lines of Enquiry questions relate only to ‘significant’ partnerships. The toolkit will facilitate the identification of significant partnerships based upon factors such as potential impact on objectives, resources invested and influence on policy. (See **Appendix A**).

The proposed toolkit

9. The toolkit will be in an electronic format. It will be available through the intranet and will comprise of an on-line questionnaire to be completed for each partnership (see **Appendix B** for sample extract). The response to the questions:
 - (a) will be captured and will automatically populate a central partnership database.
 - (b) the database will automatically determine which partnerships are classed as significant.
 - (c) whilst completing the questionnaire each partnership lead officer will receive appropriate guidance generated on-line and tailored to needs depending on the answers given, this will be written guidance or a referral to a support service as necessary;(see **Appendix C** for example).
 - (d) advice received will be confirmed by the automatic production of an action plan at the end of the questionnaire highlighting any issues to address.
 - (e) the responses captured in the database will be monitored by the Insurance and Risk Management Section, who will ensure that the data is updated at least annually and that appropriate actions are taken upon any identified issues to address.

10. Importantly, the toolkit underpins and compliments developing work on the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy and the Community Engagement Strategy. The delivery of both of these strategies is particularly reliant on effective partnership working. The improvements to the toolkit are timely in the way that they will also be able to support a review of the Community Strategy and the structures and partnerships which deliver it.

Annual review of significant partnerships

11. There will be an annual review process led by the Chief Executive of Darlington Partnership, based upon the completed questionnaire. These reviews will be reported to Cabinet, and will summarise the partnership's function and objectives, provide an analysis of the use of resources, identify any issues of concern (e.g. accountability, staffing, risk management etc), draw conclusions and suggest a plan of action where appropriate. The first such report detailing the results of the pilot will be presented to Cabinet in June 2007.

Entering into new partnerships

12. The creation of all new partnerships will require approval by both the responsible Director in consultation with the relevant cabinet portfolio holder and the Chief Executive of the LSP and for those classed as significant, approval from Cabinet.

Roles and Responsibilities

13. A summary of the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the partnership working process is given in **Appendix D**.

Outcome of Consultation

14. No formal consultation was undertaken in the production of this report

Legal Implications

15. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

16. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

17. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

Decision Deadline

18. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

Key Decisions

19. This report does not represent a key decision.

Recommendation

20. It is recommended that

- (a) the partnership toolkit be adopted from April 2007.
- (b) usage of the toolkit be rolled out to partnership lead officers after relevant training.

Reasons

21. The recommendation is supported by the following reasons:-

- (a) To enhance Corporate Governance arrangements.
- (b) To help meet the requirements of the CPA Use of Resources Methodology.
- (c) To enhance the relevance and performance of partnerships in Darlington in anticipation of Comprehensive Area Assessments in the future.

Lorraine O'Donnell
Assistant Chief Executive

Paul Wildsmith
Director of Corporate Services

Background Papers

Audit Commission Report – Governing Partnerships- Bridging the Accountability Gap- October 2005.

Use of Resources KLOE

Brian James Extension 2140
Paula Coxon Telephone 351862

Significant Partnerships

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 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

Form1 - Microsoft Office InfoPath 2003

File Edit View Insert Format Tools Table Help

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Darlington Borough Council - Partnership Toolkit

The purpose of this toolkit is to record key information regarding partnership working undertaken by the authority and to offer appropriate guidance to address a range of issues. Following this guidance will ensure that authority has a consistent and rigorous approach to partnership working and that we realise its full benefits.

Partnership Definition: An agreement between two independent bodies to work collectively to achieve an objective (this does not include arrangements such as PFI contracts)

Partnership name: *

Start date: *

Expected end date: *

Lead Officer within DBC at an operational level: *

Responsible Head of Service/Assistant Director: *

Guidance:

Department: *

Provide names of the key partners: *

Add another Partner

Help:

What are the main functions of the partnership? *

Does DBC have a statutory duty or other government requirement to enter into the partnership? Yes No

How does the partnership contribute to DBC Corporate Objectives?
(Complete grid where 1 is 'not at all' and 4 is 'the partnership is one of the major contributors')

	1	2	3	4
Shaping a better Darlington	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing Excellent Services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Putting The Customer First	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensuring Access For All	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enhancing our capacity to improve	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How does the partnership contribute to Community Strategy objectives?

Form template's location: C:\infopathForms\Darlington Questionnaire2.xsn

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Financial Management

The partnership must produce regular reports on financial performance. It is important that such reporting meets the needs of all stakeholder audiences e.g. the partnership board, funding bodies, key partners etc.

These reports must include up to date expenditure and income figures and projected figures to the year-end. These reports must be underpinned by budget monitoring sheets signed by the budget holder. Partners must also be asked to sign to verify that any grant monies are spent in accordance with their financial regulations.

The financial performance of the partnership must be linked to operational performance. This may well be a requirement of key partnership funders or partners, but in any event the partnership should do this for the purposes of its own management

The partnership must ensure that such reports cover all issues that have/could have a financial impact and ensure that it uses the reports to inform decisions about the planned spending and activity of the partnership.

Issues to consider

- Is it clear where accountability lies for financial matters?
- Have procedures for managing and monitoring pooled budgets been developed?
- Is it clear whose standing orders/financial regulations /Constitution are to be used?
- Has action been taken to assess and ensure compliance?
- Is it clear who is authorised to spend partnership funds?
- Is the process for approving spending clear, documented and agreed by the partnership?
- Is the procedure for applying for grants and external funding clear?
- Is it clear how grant claims should be processed and accounted for?
- Is there a clear audit trail, especially between organisations?
- Do different auditors agree on this?
- Is there a clear policy on procurement within the partnership?
- Where resources are jointly purchased or commissioned, is there clarity over ownership, responsibilities, etc.?
- Have the implications of VAT and other taxation requirements of, and differences between, different organisations been considered?
- Is there a fraud prevention strategy applying to the partnership?

If you need any advice on any finance related issues please contact Marie Ruddock.
Or email Finance@darlington.gov.uk

Partnerships – DBC Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Lead Officer

- To complete the on-line questionnaire for the partnership
- To provide a point of contact between the Council and the partnership
- To assist the partnership work with the Council
- To facilitate the Council's input into the partnership
- To review performance against agreed procedures and targets and to report regularly to their Head of Service.
- To report on an exception basis to their Head of Service if any issues arise between regular reports
- To alert relevant officers to any issues e.g. Internal Audit, Personnel etc.
- To facilitate an annual self-assessment of the partnership's activity and make recommendations about any action required.

Role of Head of Service (Sponsoring Department)

- To report to AD/Director on progress with 'their' partnerships
- To assess findings of review and evaluation and make formal recommendations
- To contribute to overall assessment of effectiveness of partnerships
- To action any points arising from the review and/or evaluation
- To ensure organisation benefits from learning
- With lead officers to troubleshoot any problems that arise in the day-to-day operation of the partnership which impact on or involve the Council.

Role of Assistant Chief Executive

- To liaise with Heads of Service to address any major partnership issues
- To produce an annual report summarising the outcome of the reviews and evaluations of significant partnerships
- To identify any actions necessary
- To identify learning from the past year and make recommendations as appropriate to ensure that the organisation benefits
- To ensure fit with the Council's Performance Management Framework.
- To review the content of the partnership toolkit annually

Role of Director

- To approve new partnerships in consultation with the relevant Cabinet portfolio holder and the Chief Executive of the LSP, subject to Cabinet approval for those classed as significant.

Role of CMT

- To receive reports on individual partnerships as necessary and agree any actions which do not require a member decision
- To ensure that partnerships are properly supported and that resources are provided to allow partnerships to succeed
- To monitor overall impact of partnerships and advise Monitoring and Co-ordination Group/Cabinet on any further action required

Role of Monitoring and Co-ordination Group

- To consider, if necessary, the annual evaluation report on significant partnerships. Analyse and challenge outcomes, impact and direction and make recommendations to Cabinet, as appropriate
- To refer reports to relevant scrutiny committees where necessary.

Role of Cabinet Portfolio Holder

- To approve new partnerships in consultation with the responsible Director and the Chief Executive of the LSP, subject to Cabinet approval for those classed as significant.

Role of Cabinet

- To approve any new significant partnerships
- To receive an annual report from the Assistant Chief Executive on significant partnership.
- To receive reports, as appropriate, from Monitoring and Co-ordination Group or a scrutiny committee on the effectiveness of the Council's involvement in partnerships
- To agree where necessary future direction and/or any actions arising from the evaluation
- To assess the Council's continued involvement in partnerships

Role of Chief Executive of Darlington Partnership.

- To lead on the facilitation of annual self-assessments using the on-line questionnaire.
- To comment on the self assessments of significant partnerships in an annual report to the Assistant Chief Executive of the Council.
- To champion the use of this toolkit
- To comment on the viability and strategic fit of any new partnership, and relevance of existing partnerships

- To review the content of the partnership toolkit annually in agreement with the Assistant Chief Executive of the Council.

Role of the Insurance and Risk Management Section

- To assist lead officers in completing the toolkit questionnaire as necessary
- To administer, maintain and develop the software as necessary
- To monitor usage of the toolkit
- To follow up as necessary wherever responses indicate that action is required.