
ANNUAL REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT PARTNERSHIPS 2014 - 2015

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To present the outcome of the annual review of significant partnerships to enable the Audit Committee to consider the partnerships that the Council is involved with and to ensure that they have adequate governance arrangements in place.

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.
3. The existing toolkit is now on an obsolete Microsoft platform and, given the reduction in recent years of the number of partnerships the Council is involved with, additional investment in IT development is not considered appropriate. A revised system is to be implemented that will incorporate the principles of the current toolkit to provide the same level of assurance as to the governance and performance of the partnerships.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that the review of significant partnerships be endorsed and the actions being taken to address outstanding issues be noted.

Reasons

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

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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 2015
- (v) Changes to Partnerships in Darlington Report to Cabinet 6 March 2012

S17 Crime and Disorder	The Darlington Partnership and Safe and Cohesive Community Group 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 and the Health and Wellbeing Board have been key partnerships in ensuring that the Health and Wellbeing Strategy is delivered to improve all aspects of the health and well-being of people in Darlington.
Carbon Impact	The Darlington Partnership has been key in ensuring the environmental and economic sustainability of Darlington is 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

6. 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.
7. In order to demonstrate fulfilment of these 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 year's review have been addressed or are in hand.
9. The existing toolkit is now on an obsolete Microsoft platform and, given the reduction in recent years of the number of partnerships the Council is involved with, additional investment in IT development is not considered appropriate. A revised system is to be implemented that will incorporate the principles of the current toolkit to provide the same level of assurance as to the governance and performance of the partnerships.

Criteria for a Partnership to be classed as 'Significant'

10. 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.
11. The partnerships identified as significant in accordance with this definition for 2014/15 are as follows:-
- (a) 11 - 19 Partnership
 - (b) Creative Darlington
 - (c) Darlington Partnership Board (the LSP)
 - (d) Darlington Safeguarding Children Board
 - (e) Darlington Youth Offending Service
 - (f) Drug and Alcohol Action Team
 - (g) Safe and Cohesive Community Group (was CDRP)
 - (h) Safeguarding Adults Board
 - (i) Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (was TVU)

Performance and Governance of Partnerships 2014-15

12. 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>
13. All of the partnerships have evidenced good performance towards identified objectives for 2014/15 and have either established revised objectives for 2015/16 or have arrangements in place to do so.
14. Partnerships are complying with the governance requirements covered by the toolkit.
15. Reduction in funding and the consequent effect on capacity are the predominant issues raised by Lead Officers that have potential implications for the effective operation of the partnerships.

16. The position on the issues raised will continue to be monitored by the relevant partnership lead officers.

Outcome of Consultation

17. Consultation with the Chairs and Lead Officers of the key partnerships was undertaken in the production of this report.