



District of **easington**.

Item no

Report to: **Audit Committee**
Date: **12th March 2009**
Report of: **Governance and Risk Manager**
Subject: **Review of the Councils Partnership Arrangements**
Ward: **All**

1 **Purpose of Report**

1.1 To provide a progress report to the Audit Committee on the Council's approach to managing Partnerships and the implementation of the Council's Partnership Framework.

2 **Consultation**

2.1 In preparing this report I have consulted with the Executive Member for Improvement and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services.

3 **Background**

3.1 The Council has a track record of strong partnership working which has been recognised by the Audit Commission in CPA and pilot CPA inspections and in our Direction of Travel assessments. Effective partnership working is essential in tackling the issues facing the District, and the collective impact the Council and partners are having on many of the NRF floor target areas is testimony to the success of this working.

3.2 As part of its annual review of Corporate Risks in 2006, the Council recognised that partnership working posed risks to the Council and recognised this in the corporate risk register. This has been further reinforced as part of the Councils review of its governance arrangements and the development of a new Local Code of Governance in 2008

3.3 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. A proliferation of partnerships can stretch the capacity of the organisation and of individuals within it. Engaging in partnerships must therefore add demonstrable value to any activity the



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Council or another partner may undertake on its own for the benefit of Easington people.

4.0 **The Partnership Framework**

4.1 The Council adopted a Partnership Framework in 2007 which put in place a formal structure by which the Council can make decisions about whether and how to enter into, participate in and, if necessary, leave partnership arrangements. The Framework consists of:

- a policy statement about the Council's approach to and involvement in partnerships;
- a definition of Partnerships;
- a partnership checklist to be used before a partnership is established or entered into to demonstrate the business case;
- a partnership review tool which can be used at appropriate times in a partnership's life;
- a partnerships register setting out the Council's key partnerships which is intended to be a live document.

4.2 The Partnership Checklist, used before entering into a partnership, would ensure that the business case for the partnership is fully explored. The Council would only establish or join a partnership if it is satisfied, through use of the checklist, that a partnership approach is the most appropriate method for delivering the stated objectives

4.3 Where a partnership is already in place, the Partnership Review checklist can be used at any time in its life to ensure it remains fit for purpose. Each partnership in which the Council has a leadership role will undertake a review exercise at least every two years, using either this tool or, where appropriate, other tools (e.g. GONE tools for Local Strategic Partnerships and LAAs).

5.0 **Current Position Statement**

5.1 The Council has not fully implemented the adopted Partnership Framework despite many of the requirements having already been dealt with in a less structured and formal way.

5.2 To address this, a Partnerships Action Plan has been developed by the Councils Governance and Risk Manager to deal with the Councils' governance arrangements and the compliance requirements with the adopted Partnership Framework.

A copy of the Partnerships Action Plan is attached as **Appendix1**

5.3 The approach taken has been pragmatic and proportionate particularly taking into account Local Government re-organisation and the need to effectively balance resources and capacity available to the Council against the risks involved.



4 **District of Easington Partnerships Action Plan 2008/09**

- 4.1 The attached Partnership Action Plan (**Appendix 1**) illustrates:
- the Council's adopted Partnership Framework requirements,
 - the Actions required to meet the Framework requirements and;
 - the outcomes associated with those actions
- 4.2 The Action Plan illustrates significant progress across all identified areas.
- 4.3 The Councils Register of Key Partners (**Appendix 2**) has been updated and all partners have been prioritised on the following basis:
- directly contributes to the Council's strategic objectives;
 - the partnership has a continued lifespan beyond 31st March 2009;
 - there is in place a contractual or relationship of mutual benefit;
 - the impact of the Partnership on the achievement of the Councils Strategic Objectives
- 4.4 Accordingly, 4 Key/Significant partnerships have been prioritised, identified and reviewed using the Councils partnership framework checklist:
- East Durham Community Development Trust,
 - East Durham Homes,
 - East Durham LSP,
 - East Durham Business Service
- 4.5 No further action has been taken with the other partners in view of them not being considered a priority especially taking into account Local Government Review and the lifespan of the District Council of Easington.
- 4.6 The Partnership review is a key element of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and Annual Governance Statement in that it provides assurance that the Council is effectively managing its partnership arrangements . It also complies with the Council's adopted Risk Management Strategy and Policy.

6 **Local Code of Governance & Risk Management Review**

- 6.1 Presented separately to this report are two additional reports covering:
- the review of the Councils Local Code of Governance
 - the review of the Councils approach to Risk Management



all of which directly relate to each other and provide cross cutting evidence and progress to each respective function and are cross referenced in the Corporate Risk Register and Local Code of Governance Workplan.

7 **Implications**

7.1 **Financial**

There are no financial implications arising directly from the report. Any cost implications have been dealt with under existing budgets.

7.2 **Legal**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 **Policy**

There are no direct policy implications arising from this report.

7.4 **Local Government Reorganisation**

The partnerships Action Plan outcomes provide evidence and assurance to the continuing Durham County Council of the Councils current and existing partners.

7.5 **Risk**

There are no specific risks arising from the report, other than the potential impact upon the District Council from those partners that have not been subject to a formal review.

7.6 **Corporate Plan and Priorities**

These proposals are consistent with the Council's Mission, Priorities and Objectives. In particular the proposals are consistent with:-

Priority 2	Striving for Excellence in the Workplace
SFE2	To develop the capacity to achieve in the organisation

7.7 **Equality and Diversity**

There are no direct equality and diversity issues arising from the report.

7.8 **E-Government**

There are no direct e-government issues arising from this report.

7.9 **Procurement**

There are no direct procurement issues arising from this report.

7.10 **Communication**

The work of the Governance, Risk and Legal Services Unit is published and regularly updated on both the Council's Internet and Intranet.



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The updated Partnership Register is also available on the Council's website.

8 **Conclusion**

- 8.1 The report provides a progress report to Audit Committee on the Council's approach to managing partnerships and how it has complied with the Council's adopted Partnership Framework. There are no significant matters arising from the review of the 4 prioritised Key/Significant Council Partnerships.

9 **Recommendation**

- 9.1 Audit Committee is requested to:

- Consider and note the content of the report;
- Consider and note the progress made with the Partnerships Action Plan
- Identify any partnership issues that need to be referred or highlighted to the new Unitary Durham County Council

Background Papers and Documents

Unit files
DOE Partnership Framework
DOE Partnership Register
2008 -09 Corporate Risk Review & Refresh
Risk Register
Local Code of Governance