

Report to: **Executive**
Date: **20 March 2007**
Report of: **Executive Member for Improvement**
Subject: **Partnership Framework**
Ward: **All**

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To seek agreement to a Partnership Framework for the Council

2.0 Consultation

This report has been consulted with Management Team and with key officers responsible for working in partnership. Since the Framework fulfils part of Audit Commission recommendations regarding governance, the Internal Audit Manager and Principal Administration officer have also been consulted.

3.0 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 Direction of Travel. Partnership working is felt to be 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 some risks to the Council (see 3.4 below) and recognised this in the corporate risk register.
- 3.3 In 2006 the Council took part in a countywide Audit Commission inspection of partnership working, linking in with that organisation's publication *Governing Partnerships*, which was particularly concerned with ensuring value for money and clear accountability in partnership working. The recommendations arising from this work for Easington council were that the Council should:
- Produce a definition of partnership working for the Council
 - Develop a database of key partnerships
- 3.4 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 Council or another partner might undertake on its own for the benefit of Easington people.

4. Use of the Framework

- 4.1 This Partnership Framework puts 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 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 will be used in future before entering into a partnership. This will ensure that the business case for the partnership is fully explored. The Council will 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 standard tools are used (eg GONE tools for Local Strategic Partnerships and LAAs) using these.
- 4.4 Following the adoption of the Framework, the Council will need to decide, based on data in the Partnerships Register, which partnerships should be reviewed in the coming year.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial Implications

This report has no direct financial implications.

5.2 Legal Implications

This report has no direct legal implications

5.3 Policy Implications

The Partnership Framework will become part of the policy framework by which the Council governs itself. Use of a Partnership Framework is intended to ensure that partnerships represent the best option for delivering objectives and offer value for money; this Framework is therefore linked to the Council's VFM activities.

5.4 Risk Implications

Partnership working has been recognised as one of the Council's corporate risks. This Partnership Framework contains tools which allow the recognition and mitigation of risks associated with partnership working. Having a Partnership Framework in place is considered to mitigate the corporate risk associated with partnership working.

5.5 Communications

This Framework will be placed on the Intranet so that all Members and staff can access and use it.

6. Corporate Implications

6.1 Corporate Plan and Priorities

The Partnership Framework will assist the Council in its partnership working activities to deliver Corporate Plan objectives.

6.2 Service Plans

Services undertaking partnership reviews should build these into their Service Plans

6.3 Performance Management and Scrutiny

The Partnership Framework puts in place checks that partnerships have performance management systems and are regularly monitoring and reviewing performance.

6.4 Sustainability

There are no sustainability implications.

6.5 Expenditure related to 'well-being' powers

There are no direct well being implications.

6.6 Human Resource Implications

There are no HR implications

6.7 Information Technology

There are no I.T. implications

6.8 Equality and Diversity

There are no Equality and Diversity implications

6.9 Crime and Disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications

6.10 Human Rights

There are no human rights implications

6.11 Social Inclusion

There are no social inclusion implications

6.12 Procurement

There are no specific procurement issues.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Members are recommended to approve the Council's Partnership Framework

Background Papers

Governing Partnerships inspection.: Audit Commission 2006

Governing Partnerships: Bridging the accountability gap. Audit Commission October 2005

Assessing Strategic Partnership: the partnership assessment tool. ODPM strategic partnering taskforce 2003