

Key Partnerships Framework

November 2012



Introduction

Effective partnership working is key to the successful delivery of outcomes for Chorley. The purpose of this framework is to ensure that the key partnerships that the Council is involved in have good systems of governance. The framework ensures that for each partnership:

- we are clear about its purpose and expected outcomes when entering into partnerships;
- our own agreed priorities and objectives are being met;
- there is clarity about accountability and responsibility for outcomes;
- partnership activity and outcomes are monitored, reviewed and evaluated to ensure best use of resources; and
- risks for the council and for the partnership are assessed, agreed and managed.

The following associated documents provide more detail about some of the areas covered in this framework:

- The constitution of the Council
- Procurement strategies and policies
- Risk management framework and template
- Data quality policy and charter.
- Equality Scheme
- Adults safeguarding policy
- Safeguarding children policy
- Whistleblowing policy
- Anti fraud and corruption strategy

All of the documents above can be found on the Council's website.

What is a key partnership?

Partnership working is a potentially powerful tool for tackling difficult policy and operational problems that local agencies and organisations face. It can also be a productive way of achieving more efficient use of resources.

A partnership is an agreement between two or more independent bodies to work collectively to achieve an objective. This may include organisations that have:

- Contractual arrangements with organisations, both to provide services on behalf of the council and also to supply the council with products and services to support the smooth running of council services.
- Organisations for various sectors that the Council brings together to improve outcomes for local people by working together, such as the Chorley Partnership and related groups.
- Partnerships which are required under legislation such as the Children's Trust and Community Safety Partnership.
- Joint committees with other authorities, that have been established to oversee joint activities should as the shared financial and assurance services between Chorley and South Ribble.

Chorley's existing key partnerships

The council is involved in many partnerships, with many different partners. Clearly some partnerships are more important than others in terms of:

- Their impact on the deliver of the council's strategic objectives;
- The extent of the council's reliance on its partners to deliver core services
- Their financial value
- The scale of human and other resources involved
- The length/timescales of the commitment

- Where there is a significant degree of innovation/risk.

Taking these factors into account the list of key partnerships and their monitoring arrangements are set out in appendix A.

It is important to differentiate between these and other partnerships as the degree of governance and risk management that needs to be applied should be scaled accordingly. This list will be kept under review and amended by Policy and Communications to reflect any change in status or to accommodate important new partnerships.

Establishing new key partnerships

The Council's strategic objectives and long term outcomes are set out in the Corporate Strategy. Before entering into any new form of partnership working it is essential to be able to demonstrate clear linkage with strategic objectives. This is to ensure that resources are not unnecessarily diverted away from delivering on key priorities and targets by becoming involved in peripheral activities that do not tangibly contribute to the delivery of the Corporate Strategy.

Any proposal to enter into a new key partnering arrangement should be formally reported to and approved by Executive Cabinet. The reports should demonstrate:

- The consultation and/or procurement processes that have been followed;
- The partnerships impact on the Council's priorities;
- Consideration of the Council's exposure to risk and the potential liabilities that could be imposed on the Council. (This should include any issues raised in commercial credit checks);
- The intended structure and reasons for it;
- The resource implications of the partnership in terms of cost and staff time;
- any insurable risks and clarify responsibility and ownership;
- Governance and risk management arrangements, including terms of reference for the partnership; and
- Member and officer accountabilities and/or roles and responsibilities.

Partnerships also need to demonstrate:

- Fitness for purpose;
- Value for money; and
- Added value.

Governance arrangements

The success of any partnership depends largely on having an effective system of governance and control in place. Following approval to establish a new key partnership, control measures and governance arrangements should be set out in a memorandum of understanding/agreement that should be approved by the Head of Governance.

The agreement is only required where more detailed contracts are not already in place.

Any agreement should include or provide assurances on the following points:

Aims and objectives of the partnership

The agreement should be underpinned by a common vision that is understood and agreed by all partners. The agreement or contract should contain agreed objectives and outcomes and should be clearly aligned to the Council's strategic objectives.

Roles and responsibilities

There needs to be clarity over the roles and responsibilities of the Council and the key partners which should be supported by clear reporting lines and a decision making framework.

Where appropriate the roles and responsibilities of members of the partnership should be detailed. It may be appropriate to talk more generally about what the public, private or voluntary, community and faith sector members each bring to the partnership as groups and the area of partnership activity that they will be responsible for delivering. Consideration should also be given to:

- The number and representatives from the partnership organisations.
- Who chairs and vice chairs the partnership;
- How often membership is reviewed.

Decision making procedures

A partnership's work can be seriously impeded if decisions have to be separately ratified by the partners in advance and if the partners' decision-making processes or timetables do not fit well together. Therefore, the key partnership representatives should have sufficient authority to commit their organisations to a particular course of action. Partnerships should also plan their work carefully so that they know well in advance when decisions with significant policy or financial implications will need to be made. It is vital that all partners have sufficient time to evaluate the implications of major prospective decision and to consider their own legal and financial advice.

Code of Conduct

All members and officers will need, at all times to demonstrate high standards of personal behaviour and comply with the principles contained within the officer's code of conduct and member's conduct of conduct. These documents are published on the council's website as appendices to the Council's constitution.

In addition to members and officers we also expect partners to demonstrate high standards of honesty, integrity, objectivity, openness, personal judgement, respect for others and a strong commitment to achieving the goals and common vision of the partnership. While we cannot require partners to commit to adhering to the Council's code of conduct it is likely that partnership representatives will be subject to their own contracts of employment, which will include the need to ensure high standards of behaviour.

Whistleblowing Policy

The Council's whistleblowing policy provides a safe and anonymous approach to raising concerns about possible malpractice. Examples of what this may include are:

- conduct which is an offence or a breach of the law,
- disclosures related to miscarriages of justice,
- health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
- damage to the environment
- the unauthorised use of public funds
- misreporting of performance information
- possible fraud and corruption
- other unethical conduct

The Policy applies to

- all employees of the Council
- all other people working for the Council such as agency staff and consultants; and
- Elected Members of the Council.

The Council should take active steps to ensure that key contractors providing services on behalf of the Council either have their own whistle blowing arrangements in place or adopt the Council's.

Anti Fraud and Corruption

Chorley Council is committed to combating fraud and corruption and promoting a 'zero tolerance culture', whether the perpetrators are internal or external to the Council. The Council is very mindful of the increased importance of working with partners in all areas of its activities. In these circumstances the Council will ensure that its partners and all companies with whom it is contracted, will be fully informed of the procedures it has in place to combat fraud.

Equality and Diversity Monitoring

A strong commitment to equality and diversity does not only have a strong moral argument, and legal obligations, but it also makes good business sense. As an organisation that is committed to understanding and shaping services around customers needs, we need to be able to recognise and adapt to the diverse nature of our customers.

It is important that the Council continues to work with partner organisations to promote the values and bring about the visions of valuing diversity. As such an Integrated Impact Assessment should be carried out where any change in service of process is proposed.

In addition the agreement should include a statement on how the partnership will operate on the basis of principles that actively value the benefits of diversity and ensure fair treatment and equality of opportunity.

Data Quality

As the council works in partnership with other organisations, and relies on the information that they supply to make decisions about resource investment and performance management, it is critical that this information is of a high quality. The following steps must be taken to support strong partnership data sharing arrangements:

- A partnership data quality charter has been developed that should also be signed by all of the council's key partners;
- Where appropriate copies of organisations data quality strategies and procedures should be obtained;
- Staff obtaining data from a third party should also request any supporting evidence they need to assure themselves of the quality for the data provided by the partner; and
- If errors in shared data are uncovered all partners any errors highlighted to other partners who may use the data.

Risk Management

Partnership working is often about accepting higher risks and sharing risks as part of developing new ways of working. This needs to be balanced against the acceptable risk levels for each of the organisations involved. However partnership working can also offer additional ways of reducing or eliminating risk. Good risk management is key to delivering successful outcomes. Stakeholders in the partnership should achieve a common understanding of:

- The potential adverse conditions or opportunities associated with achieving partnership objectives;
- Their relative seriousness or where opportunities exist; and
- How adverse conditions can be managed or opportunities exploited.

This should be captured in a joint risk register, established between the Council and the partners using the Council's risk register template.

When completing the risk register, consideration should be given to each of the points within this governance section, in addition to other relevant operational risks.

Sustainable Procurement and Local Spend

Sustainable procurement is a process whereby organisations meet their needs for goods and services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits to society and the economy, whilst minimising damage to the environment. The Council and its partners play a vital role in furthering sustainable development through the procurement and management of its supply chains. Officers should work with partners to achieve sustainability and environmental objectives and extend sustainability improvements throughout the supply chain, in compliance with the Council's sustainability procurement policy.

The Council's joint procurement strategy also states that wherever possible and practical (within legal constraints), support local and third sector suppliers by encouraging them to engage in appropriate procurement exercises.

Safeguarding Children

Chorley Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and to delivering services for children that promote good practice and expects all Council representatives, colleagues and partners to share this commitment.

The Council's safeguarding children's policy sets out the Council's guidance on best practice in dealing with children and young people, protection procedures and specifies the roles and responsibilities of the Council's representatives for whom this policy is mandatory.

In line with 'Every Child Matters Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance, where council services are undertaken by partners on the behalf of Chorley Council or the council fund voluntary or community organisations whose work will involve access to children through, for example the provision of grants, the Council will seek assurance that such bodies either have their own safeguarding and child protection practices in place or have accepted those of the Council. In the case of organisations receiving significant funding provision from the Council to deliver services for children the receipt of such assurances will be a prerequisite for funding and form part of the application process if appropriate.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults

Chorley Council is committed to safeguarding vulnerable adults and to ensuring any concerns that staff and representatives of the Council may have are assessed and appropriately dealt with. We expect all Council representatives, colleagues and partners to share this commitment.

The Council's Adult Safeguarding policy sets out the Council's guidance on best practice in dealing with concerns about vulnerable adults and specifies the roles and responsibilities of the Council's representatives in regard to dealing with, and escalating if necessary, any concerns. The policy has been developed in line with 'No Secrets' (DoH 2000) guidance.

Business Continuity Arrangements

Managers should ensure that effective, relevant business continuity arrangements are maintained throughout the life of the partnership.

Dispute prevention and resolution controls

There is a risk that a partnership may be over reliant on key people to the extent that if they are absent or actually leave, the partnership itself may become under threat. The partnership agreement should also contain agreement variation and dispute resolution mechanisms so that if problems arise they are resolved quickly and amicably.

Exit Strategies

There is the potential for any partnership to fail. The Council should protect itself from this eventuality by developing a clear exit strategy for all of its key partnerships in order to mitigate the financial, reputational and other risks that could materialise. Notice periods and exceptions to notice periods should also be included.

Monitoring and review arrangements for key partnerships

In terms of performance monitoring and reporting, the Council needs to be publicly accountable for all its key partnership arrangement by regularly reporting on progress to members. Formal reports should be submitted to Executive Cabinet at least bi-annually setting out how the partnerships objectives and outputs have been delivered, what outcomes this has supported and any other issues which need to be brought to members' attention.

Where key partnerships do not already have arrangements in place to report to Executive Cabinet on a bi-annual basis, policy and communications will work with relevant services to produce a bi-annual performance report on the key partnerships. Appendix A, clarifies which of the key partnerships this is applicable to. The key partnerships performance report should inform members of:

1. The performance of the Council's key partnerships against targets set for the current year;
2. Any emerging issues including whether contracts are on budget;
3. An assessment of key partners strength and stability; and
4. An update on the changes to our key partnerships.

At an officer level, managers responsible for key partnerships must check that partner organisations continue to have effective governance arrangements in place and it is recommended that governance arrangements are included on the agenda of partnership meetings at least on an annual basis.

In addition to regular monitoring of performance all existing key partnerships need to be reviewed every three years for continuing relevance to the Council's priorities. There are two aspects to this:

1. Review of the partnership itself; providing assurance that effective governance arrangements are in place and that its outcomes performance are monitored and evaluated.
2. The council must decide whether its requirements are being met and be assured that the partnership is effective.

A timetable of reviews will be coordinated by Policy and Communications but the reviews themselves should be led by the appropriate service.

Policy and Communications will also take responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the overall key partnerships framework.

Managers' Responsibilities

Managers responsible for key partnerships must adhere to this framework, which specifically includes:

- Reporting any proposal to enter into a new key partnering arrangement to Executive Cabinet, incorporating all of the points identified in the 'establishing a new key partnership' section of this framework.

- Establishing a memorandum of understanding, covering the governance arrangements of the partnership and the partnership organisations, on approval of a new key partnership, and gain approval from the head of governance.
- Ensure effective and regular monitoring arrangements are in place, as per the monitoring and review arrangements for key partnerships section within this framework.

Appendix A - List of Key Partnerships and Monitoring Arrangements

Partnership	Lead Service	Remit	Monitoring Arrangements	Additional monitoring required?
The Chorley Partnership (LSP)	Policy and Communications	To work on a multi-agency basis in coordinating a local approach to improving outcomes for local people and in particular delivering the sustainable community strategy.	Quarterly performance monitoring reports are presented to the Chorley Partnership and Executive Cabinet.	No
Active Nation	Streetscene and Leisure Contracts	The management of the Council's indoor leisure facilities and to increase the number of centre users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly operational meetings are held with the contractor. Twice yearly partnership board meetings to which the Executive Member is invited. Capital programme monitoring reports include expenditure on the leisure centre buildings. Expenditure over £75k on the buildings will normally require an Executive Member decision or report to Cabinet. 	Yes
Veolia	Streetscene and Leisure Contracts	To provide a waste and recycling collection service and deliver service improvements throughout the lifetime of the contract.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular operational meetings are held. Quarterly partnership board meetings to which the Executive Member is invited. Proposed changes to service are reported to Executive Cabinet. 	Yes
Glendale	Streetscene and Leisure Contracts	Management of Duxbury Park golf course.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular operational meetings Twice yearly partnership board meetings to which the Executive Member is invited Additional reports are also presented to Executive Cabinet on major proposals i.e. course improvements, access road 	Yes
Lancashire Waste Partnership (LWP)	Streetscene and Leisure Contracts	To coordinate waste management across the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular officers meetings. Thrice yearly LWP meetings for the Executive member. Major changes i.e. adoption of waste strategy, changes to cost share would go to Cabinet or be an Exec member report. 	No
Liberata	Governance	To provide a professional property management and	Bi-monthly partnership meetings at an officer level.	Yes

Partnership	Lead Service	Remit	Monitoring Arrangements	Additional monitoring required?
		maintenance service.		
Select Move	Strategic Housing	To provide a sub-regional choice based lettings scheme with a common allocations policy	<p>There are monthly Steering Group meetings which the Housing manager (Options) usually attends and this is where any significant issues are raised and where decisions are made. This is the group which oversees the policy.</p> <p>Quarterly reports are produced to summarise performance and customer satisfaction surveys are also done periodically.</p> <p>There is also an operational group which meets monthly to discuss process/consistency etc.</p>	Yes
Capita Business Services Ltd	Customer, ICT & Transactional Services	Revenues and Benefits software system solution	Regular meetings with suppliers	Yes
Northgate information solutions	Customer, ICT & Transactional Services	Provision of docs online managed service	Regular meetings with suppliers	Yes
IDOX	Customer, ICT & Transactional Services	Provision of planning, land charges, environment and licensing software.	Regular meetings with suppliers	Yes
Blackpool Council	HR&OD	To provide a payroll and expenses service for all employees and elected members.	Regular service review meetings with Blackpool and finance check and monitor the invoices that come in	Yes
Shared financial and assurance services	CEO / Shared Financial Services	Shared financial and assurance services	A joint committee is held on a regular basis to monitor performance of the shared service.	No
Civica	Shared Financial Services	To provide the core financials system software licence and maintenance.	The contract is monitored by exception through the shared service performance report, reported to the joint committee.	Yes

