

Partnership Policy

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Partnership Policy

Summary

Shepway District Council is committed to working in effective and efficient partnerships. Partnership working is a valuable tool for targeting cross-cutting policy and operational issues. It can also be an effective and efficient means of sharing limited resources. However, partnership working can be costly and can only be justified when a partnership's achievements outweigh the costs involved (both in terms of staff and financial resources). The scope and number of partnerships have increased substantially in the public services arena as a result of pressure from central government and changing local needs. It is vital the council regularly evaluates its partnerships to ensure they are contributing to the improvement of service delivery and are doing so in an effective and efficient manner.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for the effective management of partnerships (both existing and new) and to offer guidance to those individuals directly involved in partnerships. The policy also outlines the governance arrangements to be observed in undertaking and maintaining partnerships.

The council will maintain, monitor and evaluate its **Corporate Partnerships** through a partnership register.

This policy explains in more detail the council's vision and scope for partnership working; it provides clarity of the types of partnerships the council is involved with and guidance to assist in making decisions regarding setting up or joining partnerships.

Purpose

This policy provides the council's vision and scope for partnership working, together with definitions of partnerships. It also outlines the criteria for the council entering into or establishing a partnership.

For clarity, a partnership checklist (Partnership Information Form) has been developed which must be completed by the lead officer and/or elected member (if applicable). The checklist provides the key elements that all partnerships need to work to or have in place to enable the council to determine if the partnership is one the council wishes to enter into or continue with. This policy does not apply to the council's relationship with services - third party service providers or the wide range of organisations with which the council has informal working relations - as part of its operational activities.

The policy seeks to ensure, in the context of each partnership, that:

- Both the council and its representative on the partnership are clear about its purpose and expected outcomes
- The council's own strategic objectives and priorities are being met
- Best use is made of resources
- There is clarity and accountability for outcomes
- Partnership involvement, activity and outcomes are monitored and reviewed
- Risks for the council, and for the **Corporate partnerships**, are agreed and regularly assessed
- Each partnership maintains its agreed purpose over time
- Each partnership is properly authorised and empowered, and its legal status understood.
- The principles of diversity and equality as outlined in the council's Diversity Policy are reflected within its work.

This policy outlines the approaches to be applied when considering both setting up new partnerships and reviewing existing arrangements.

Vision

“To ensure the partnerships the council is involved in are managed in an efficient and effective way, focusing on actions and outcomes that support the council to deliver its strategic objectives.”

Aims

The council will establish formal partnerships, working at strategic and operational levels, where there are clear opportunities to achieve some or all of its strategic objectives.

The policy aims to provide clarity to the roles, responsibilities and relationships we enter into through partnership working. In addition, the policy will ensure that partnerships satisfy the requirement to properly fulfill our obligations with regard to governance and the management of public funds.

Definitions

Partnership

The council defines a partnership as **a formal working arrangement involving one or more independent bodies, from any sector, who share responsibility and agree to co-operate towards a common goal.** A formal agreement is made by all partners to work together for specific outcomes.

In summary, all partnerships will agree:

- A shared strategic vision/objectives;
- Resource availability/requirements;
- Clear measurable outcomes;
- Risks;
- Timescales for review or lifespan of partnership.

Partners should:

- Be independent bodies working willingly in collaboration with each other;
- Agree to co-operate and commit resources to achieve a common goal/s;

- Create a process by which to work together, to develop and implement and monitor a joint programme of work;
- Be prepared to share relevant information, risks and rewards;
- Recognise the statutory obligations of the council and its discretionary functions;
- Be prepared to accept decisions made by the partnership within the agreed parameters.

A partnership can be as small as just two partners and may well be established to deliver a focused, time limited project. They can also be statutory e.g. CDRP where membership is mandatory for the council.

Contractual Arrangements

Is defined as an arrangement made by the council with a third party to deliver a service on its behalf where the council and the service provider do not have a shared objective, for example, a simple contractual arrangement. The council is the sole procurer of the service and the third party is the contracted provider. The objective of the council is to secure delivery of the service and the objective of the service provider is to secure a profit.

Joint Working Arrangements/Collaborative Working

Forums or groups that the Elected Members and/or Officers belong to who come together to discuss policy, strategy or forthcoming issues. Whilst these involve collaborative working and are similar to partnerships, the key difference is there is no formal agreement or, in some cases, agreed outcomes.

The council may participate in an advisory capacity or to gain a wider view to inform developments within the council.

Another area of joint working is where the council provides funding over a fixed period in return for an agreed set of actions. For example, community funding agreements (grants) with the voluntary sector.

Shared Services

In the current financial climate for local government, there is a growing need to look for alternative methods of providing services and functions. Shared services provide a mechanism for a local authority to arrange for the discharge of its functions by another local authority. For the purposes of this policy, this definition specifically relates to East Kent Joint Arrangements Committee that has been established by the delegating authorities to discharge of agreed functions and services.

Corporate Partnerships

For the purpose of this Policy, **Corporate Partnerships** are defined where they meet one or both of the following criteria:

- 1) the council has a statutory duty to be involved in the partnership
- 2) the council makes a financial contribution (£5000 or more) towards the partnership

Entering into a new or existing partnership

When is a Partnership appropriate?

Before entering into or continuing any partnership, the potential benefit of the council's participation should be assessed against its own aims, objectives and responsibilities.

A partnership may be appropriate when there is:

- Synergy of the aims and objectives of the partnership with the council's aims and strategic objectives;
- No doubt that the authority will benefit from its involvement;
- A statutory duty to do so;
- Common purpose between the parties involved;
- An opportunity to achieve coordinated and cohesive outcomes;
- The potential to deliver more than the sum of individual contributions;
- An acceptable level of risk; and
- Agreement of all the parties involved to the need for the partnership in these terms.

Criteria for entering into new partnership

The council will determine the suitability for entering into a formal partnership against the following criteria:

- The work of the partnership supports and contributes to the council's Strategic Objectives and supports the council's principles and ethos e.g. equalities and diversity;
- The work of the partnership benefits residents, businesses and visitors to the district;
- The partnership is able to carry out or support functions the council needs efficiently, or enable better performance than we could do on our own;
- Arrangements are in place to regularly monitor and report on the effectiveness of the partnership; and
- Clarity of roles and remit of the partnership and the appointed officer/members.

Agreeing the Partnership

Officers and/or Members are required in the first instance to complete the Partnership Information Form (outlined in **Appendix 1**) when proposing that the council enters into a new partnership or joins an existing partnership.

The council will go through a clear decision making process before committing itself to a partnership. Depending on the type of partnership proposed and commitment in respect of resources and time there are a number of routes that approval for entering into a partnership can take.

The Partnership Information Form should be forwarded to CMT for consideration and approval and copied to Contracts Management Team for inclusion within the Partnership Register if agreed.

Managing Partnerships

Identification of Partnerships

The council will maintain details of its current partnership involvement in a Corporate Partnership Register based on the definition of **Corporate Partnerships** outlined on page 6. The purpose of this is to:

- Provide a mechanism for reviewing involvement in **Corporate Partnerships**.
- Provide clarity regarding which partnerships the Council is involved in and why, who is leading and how progress is being reported.

The Partnership Register will be maintained on behalf of the council by Contracts Management Team and made accessible to all via the internet.

Note: *The Partnership Register will not include contracts¹ or shared service² partnerships as these will be dealt with by the Procurement Team and East Kent Joint Arrangements Committee respectively.*

Partnership Agreements

A written agreement e.g. Terms of Reference must be in place for each partnership setting out (at the very least) the partnerships:

- Aims & objectives
- Legal Status
- Structures and management systems
- Membership and voting rights
- Resource and funding arrangements
- Partnership reporting arrangements
- Partner liabilities and assets
- Governance arrangements
- Arrangements if/when the partnership ceases
- Financial control, procedures, audit and accountability
- Data Protection and FOI considerations
- Expected frequency and locations of meetings/inputs
- Likely 'life span' of partnership
- Diversity and equality issues
- Publicity opportunities for the council
- Members declaration of interests
- Complaints procedure

¹ Defined as an agreement with specific terms between two or more persons or entities in which there is a promise to do something in return for a valuable benefit known as consideration.

² Relates solely to East Kent Joint Arrangements Committee that has been established by the delegating authorities to discharge of agreed functions and services.

- Details of any specific expectations/inputs from the Authority
- Monitoring and measuring progress of the partnership

This could be in the form of a formal written constitution or terms of reference for the partnership as a whole (ideally signed by each of the partners). If such a document is not in place covering all of these elements then either:

- the partnership will be asked to produce one (or amend its existing one), or
- a separate partnership agreement will be prepared and agreed with the partnership either:
 - as a supplement to a partnership constitution/terms of reference, in which case it will only cover the areas where there are gaps in the existing documents, or
 - as a 'stand alone document', in which case it will cover all of the elements above.

If a Partnership does not currently have some form of Terms of Reference, a template for a Partnership Agreement is outlined in **Appendix 2** to assist in the development of one.

Action: A Terms of Reference or a Partnership Agreement is required for each partnership. Please forward a copy of the Partnership Agreement for any **Corporate Partnerships** to the Contracts Management Team.

Working in Partnership

The creation or membership of any partnership must be supported and endorsed by the council's Corporate Management Team using the Partnership Information Form outlined in **Appendix 1**.

Membership, activities and outputs of all partnerships will be assessed annually by CMT to ensure their continuing relevance and added value to the council's strategic objectives. This will also provide an opportunity for the effectiveness of **Corporate partnerships** to be monitored and assessed and reviewed.

Resource Implications of Partnership Working

Before entering into any partnership, the council will consider its ability to contribute effectively to the partnership. Given its commitment to effective partnership working, the council will not enter into any new partnership where it considers it cannot fully and effectively contribute to its success. The council will be mindful of the resource implications involved, particularly in terms of member/officer time, finance and existing commitments.

Acting as a representative on any partnership does not permit officers or members to commit the council to the use of resources not contained within approved budgets. If financial resources are required, agreement must be sought from CMT before entering an agreement.

Conduct and Accountability

For a partnership to be effective, certain standards of conduct and accountability are expected of partnership members and others involved. Members and officers will, at all times, need to observe the Council's Codes of Conduct. Particular regard must be made in relation to the requirements of making declarations of interests.

Members and officers should ensure that all the partnerships they are involved in are governed by a suitable form of written partnership agreement. This may be a partnership document, charter, memorandum of understanding or simply a terms of reference. The form taken may be different for each partnership, dependent on its size, function and complexity (see **Appendix 2** for a template of the information required by the council).

The Council's representative on a partnership must clarify what is expected of them and the council through their membership.

Members and officers must bear in mind that acceptance of a role as a charity trustee or company director (even if accepted as part of the Council's work) is a personal responsibility. The council's insurance does not cover officers or members appointed to outside bodies, even if their appointment is directly authorised by the council. There will be personal responsibilities to the Charity Commission, as well as under company law, which must be fulfilled. Members acting as trustee or company

directors will have a duty to act in the best interests of the charity or company that could potentially conflict with their individual roles with the Council. Members should consider areas of potential conflict of interest in particular with their roles on any council committees before accepting appointments to outside bodies.

Action: If further clarification is required on the legal matters regarding the partnership, please contact the Legal Team.

Risk Management

Any risks associated with the membership of a partnership will be identified in the Partnership Information Form (**Appendix 1**). For **Corporate Partnerships**, this Form will be reviewed on an annual basis, and, where appropriate, risks will be considered for inclusion within the Council's risk register. The following checklist will help you manage risks within partnerships:

Governance

- Does the partnership have a terms of reference that all parties have agreed?
- Are the council's responsibilities clearly defined in the terms of reference and have these responsibilities been agreed by CMT?

Internal Control

- Does the partnership involve the transfer of assets or funding by the council?
- Does the partnership issue accounts or regular financial statements? Are these reported to Financial Services?
- Does the partnership have its own auditing arrangements? Is it considered within the council's internal or external audit programme?
- Has the partnership given consideration to other key council policies and legislation e.g. Data Protection, Information Sharing, Freedom of Information requests, Equalities and Diversity etc?

Risk Assessment

- If the council is the lead authority or lead partner within the partnership - Has a risk assessment been completed using the SDC scoring matrix looking at the business risks arising from the partnership's activities?
- If the council is not the lead authority or lead partner - Has the partnership completed a risk assessment looking at the business risks arising from its activities? Does the council agree with this assessment?
- How regularly are risks and risk controls monitored?
- Are the council's and individual officer's liabilities under the partnership defined? Are there insurance arrangements that cover these liabilities?

Monitoring

- Has the council set out how often it requires the activities of the partnership to be formally reported back to it?

- Has the council set out to whom the activities should be reported to?

These areas should be covered through a comprehensive Terms of Reference.

Action: Contact the Resilience & Risk Officer for further assistance or advice, if required.

Review and Evaluation

Each partnership should be reviewed on a regular basis to provide assurance that proper systems are in place and that its outcomes and performance can be monitored and evaluated. Also the review should provide assurance of its effectiveness and value.

In addition, each partnership should be evaluated on a regular basis to assess progress and to measure the impact of the partnership's activities and outcomes achieved. For **Corporate Partnerships**, the lead officer or member is required to complete an assessment of the partnership and submit this information to the Contracts Management Team for reference purposes. The Assessment Form is outlined in **Appendix 3**. A summary of this information will be provided on an annual basis to CMT for consideration.

The Contracts Management Team will undertake spot checks of individual partnership documentation to ensure partnerships meet the council's requirements and to provide an independent assessment for CMT.

Action: For each **Corporate Partnership**, the lead officer will complete a Partnership Information Form and forward a copy to the Contracts Management Team.

For all partnerships, a clear exit strategy must be in place, whether for a partnership with a known limited lifespan or generally to reduce the risks to the council and other partners involved in the partnership. All partnerships that come to an end should be evaluated by the officer/member involved and a report of key findings submitted to the Contracts Management Team for information. The evaluation should highlight the lessons learnt and main outcomes achieved. For **Corporate Partnerships**, the

evaluation report will be circulated to CMT and made available on the intranet. **Appendix 4** outlines a checklist of questions to help with the evaluation of a partnership.

Action: Undertake regular reviews of each Partnership and forward a copy of the report to the Contracts Management Team.

Changing representatives

Where an officer/member replaces another on a partnership, the current representative must:

- Provide the new member with a full brief and copy of the relevant documentation relating to the partnership; and
- Where possible, attend a partnership meeting together with the new member by way of handover and introduction.

This is also an apt time to review and evaluate the partnership to assess if it should be continued with.

The Partnership Register

The Partnership Register will be maintained by the Contracts Management Team on behalf of the council. The Partnership Register will only focus on the **Corporate Partnerships** identified. In addition, the Partnership Policy & Register will not include contractual arrangements and shared services as these are dealt with by the Procurement Team or the East Kent Joint Arrangements Committee.

The responsibility for ensuring the information for each **Corporate Partnership** is up to date lies with the lead officer or Member on the partnership from the council. They should advise the Contracts Management Team in writing of any changes to a partnership. If there are significant changes, it will be for the Contracts Management Team to determine if these changes should be considered by CMT before approval e.g. changes to funding, purpose of the partnership etc.

A quarterly update will be provided on the partnerships highlighted on the register to trigger debate about the value/outcomes of the partnerships.

The Contracts Management Team will review and update the partnership register on an annual basis and report the updated register to CMT for consideration.

Action: The Contracts Management Team will undertake an annual review of the Corporate Partnership Register.



Partnership Information Form

Name of Partnership:

Organisation that the partnership is responsible to (accountable body):

Main purpose of partnership:

Which other organisations are members:

Links/contribution the Council's Strategic Objectives and responsibilities:

Council resources required – year on year (member/staff time, funding etc):

If financial, is this within existing budgets or are additional funds required?

Likely location & frequency of meetings:

Details of any risks for the Authority (assessing likelihood and impact):

Please use the council's risk scorecard.

Date formed:

Proposed end date (if any):

Is this partnership statutory? Yes No

If "Yes", is the Authority a statutory partner? Yes No

Does the partnership have a Partnership Agreement? Yes No*

e.g constitution/terms of reference

If yes, please attach a copy to this form and briefly describe the type of agreement:

*** If an Agreement is not in place, please ensure one is set up as soon as possible and submitted to Policy & Performance Team.**

Additional information/comments:

Shepway District Council representative(s):

Name

Date started

Date finished

Partnership Review Details (Review at least annually by Contracts Management Team for agreement by CMT):

Date Reviewed By:



Partnership Agreement

Notes on completion:

To be completed in full where there is no existing partnership documentation such as a constitution or terms of reference.

If to be used as a supplement to existing partnership documentation then only complete the sections that are not adequately covered by that existing documentation.

Partnership:

Overall Purpose:

(provide a summary of expected outcomes/benefits)

Aims & objectives:

Legal Status:

Membership:

Voting Rights:

Structures & Management systems (including any sub/working groups or parent groups):

Resourcing & funding arrangements (including specific implications for the council):

Partner assets (list any assets provided by partners or those of the partnership):

Partner liabilities (including any financial arrangements if/when the partnership ceases):

Exit Strategies (Arrangements if/when the partnership ceases):

Governance Arrangements:

Details of any specific expectations/inputs from the council:

Financial control, procedures, audit and accountability:

Data Protection & FOI considerations:

Diversity & Equalities:

Publicity opportunities for the council:

Expected frequency of meetings/inputs

Complaints procedure:

Likely duration of partnership:

Member's declaration of interest:

Partnership Assessment

FEATURE	STANDARD	1 Not in place – priority for action	2 Partly in place – action needed	3 Action identified – being implemented	4 Standard met – no action needed	<u>EVIDENCE</u> Please indicate where evidence can be found to demonstrate position
1. <u>Action and outcome focused</u>	The partnership has a clear purpose, agreed vision, targets and milestones and can demonstrate that it is delivering improvements to quality of life and supports the council’s Strategic Objectives.					
2. <u>Well governed</u>	The partnership has documented governance arrangements and mechanisms in place to minimise financial and legal risks.					
3. <u>Good leadership</u>	The partnership has clear leadership and partners harness their energies to achieve more than they could on their own.					
4. <u>Efficient</u>	The partnership has effective agenda management, administrative support arrangements and uses resources productively.					
5. <u>Inclusive</u>	The partnership actively promotes equality and diversity, and involves services users and key stakeholders as appropriate.					
6. <u>Outward focused</u>	The partnership is aware of the wider context within which it operates and has clear links and relationships.					

Appendix 3 cont'd

FEATURE	STANDARD	1 Not in place – priority for action	2 Partly in place – action needed	3 Action identified – being implemented	4 Standard met – no action needed	EVIDENCE Please indicate where evidence can be found to demonstrate position
7. <u>Committed to learning and development</u>	The partnership learns from best practice, encourages learning and development and is willing to change.					
8. <u>Effective performance management</u>	The partnership has a clear performance management system in place, can demonstrate progress on its targets and shares information.					
9. <u>Trust</u>	The partnership has good, supportive working relationships between partners and risks and rewards are shared.					
10. <u>Evaluates regularly</u>	The partnership regularly reviews its membership, policies and has strategies that are clearly evidence based using sources such as statistics and consultation.					

A checklist for evaluating a partnership

Partnerships should be regularly evaluated, both during the time they are up and running and when they come to an end. This gives an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the partnership and its outcomes and also enables the council to apply any learning in establishing or working with others across the authority.

There is no prescriptive way of writing the evaluation, however, the following areas and questions should be considered within the report. All partnership evaluation reports should be undertaken on a regular basis and as quickly as possible, particularly after a partnership ceases, while the information and experience is still fresh in your mind. When complete, please send a copy of the evaluation report to the Contracts Management Team.

Summary

- Please state the reasons for the evaluation, update or due to partnership being concluded.
- Overall, what is working well/worked well with the partnership?
- Which key areas of the partnership and its work could be been improved?

Membership

- Provide a list of the members of the partnership.
- Are/were the right members on the partnership?
- On average, how good is/was turn out at meetings?
- How active are/were members in planning, implementing and evaluating the intervention?
- How well does/did the partners work together?
- How could the membership be/have been improved?

Partnership Agreement

- Provide an outline of the key aims and objectives for the partnership.
- Does/did the partnership meet its aims and objectives as outlined in the partnership agreement?
- What performance and monitoring arrangements are/were set up for the partnership?
- How effective is/was the partnership agreement in structuring the partnership?

Key outcomes

- Provide a list of the activities and outcomes delivered or contributed to by the partnership.
- Are/were these outcomes in line with the partnership agreement?
- If they changed during this period, please give an explanation of why and if this changed the nature/remit of the partnership.
- Overall, does/did the partnership deliver its outcomes and activities effectively and efficiently?

Use of Resources

- Please summarise the main resources provided by the council to the partnership (officer time and funding).
- Do/did other partners contribute financial resources in addition to time, expertise, and other in-kind contributions?

Engagement

- How does/ did the partnership communicate its work and progress?
- Who does/did the partnership engage and involve in its work?
- What methods for engagement and involvement are/were used?
- Are/were the methods successful? How could they be/have been improved?
- How does/did the partnership resolve conflict?

For further information on this Policy, please contact
leadership.support@shepway.gov.uk