

Subject: Partnership Governance Framework

Report to: Audit and Risk Committee, 14 December 2020

Report by: Kaye Bate, Corporate Risk Officer



SUBJECT MATTER/RECOMMENDATIONS

This report contains an update to the Partnership Governance Framework, in accordance with best practice.

Recommendation to Audit and Risk Committee: To approve the revised Partnership Governance Framework as set out in the attached document.

1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Partnerships play a key role in delivering community strategies and in helping to promote the well-being of the area. Local authorities work in partnership with others – public agencies, private companies, community groups and voluntary groups. Local Authorities still deliver services, but their distinctive leadership role is to bring together contributions of the various stakeholders. They therefore need to deliver a shared vision of services based on user wishes.
- 1.2 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) guidance places a greater emphasis on governance arrangements in partnerships and in the need for clear lines of accountability:
 - Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably
 - Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively
 - Ensuring that partnerships are based on:
 - trust
 - a shared commitment to change
 - a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners
 - Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved
- 1.3 This governance framework complies with good practice including Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (CIPFA/SOLACE) and aims to ensure that Great Yarmouth Borough Council maintains a structured approach to entering into new partnerships or membership to outside bodies

2. Partnership Governance Framework

- 2.1 The Partnership Governance Framework aims to clarify responsibilities for identifying, reporting and to increase awareness of good governance and risk management.

2.2 The Framework is required to be reviewed every 3 years and submitted to the Audit and Risk committee for approval. On an annual basis details of the responsible officers are reviewed to ensure that the details remain relevant and up to date.

2.3 The Partnership Governance Framework provides guidance to officers on:

- What partnership working is
- How to enter into a new partnership
- How to set up a new partnership
- How to maintain appropriate governance arrangements in existing partnerships
- How to exit from a partnership

The framework does not cover:

- Procurements (unless they are delivering major services in a strategic arrangements)
- Informal discussion / consultation groups
- Short term arrangements

2.4 In support of the Partnership Governance Framework a Partnership Register is maintained which lists all the partnerships that the council are involved in or lead on.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None

4. RISK IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct risks or implications arising from this report

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The attached Partnership Governance Framework has been reviewed in accordance with best practice.

Areas of consideration: e.g. does this report raise any of the following issues and if so how have these been considered/mitigated against?

Area for consideration	Comment
Monitoring Officer Consultation:	No
Section 151 Officer Consultation:	No
Existing Council Policies:	No
Financial Implications:	No
Legal Implications (including human rights):	No
Risk Implications:	No
Equality Issues/EQIA assessment:	No
Crime & Disorder:	No
Every Child Matters:	No



PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

Date of Policy	January 2020
Author	Corporate Risk Officer
Document Status	Draft Version 5
Next Review Date	January 2020
Audit and Risk Committee	March 2020

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1.0 Introduction

Partnerships play a key role in delivering community strategies and in helping to promote the well-being of the area. Local authorities work in partnership with others – public agencies, private companies, community groups and voluntary groups. Local Authorities still deliver services, but their distinctive leadership role is to bring together contributions of the various stakeholders. They therefore need to deliver a shared vision of services based on user wishes.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) guidance places a greater emphasis on governance arrangements in partnerships and in the need for clear lines of accountability:

- Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably
- Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively
- Ensuring that partnerships are based on:
 - trust
 - a shared commitment to change
 - a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners
- Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved

This governance framework complies with good practice including Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (CIPFA/SOLACE) and aims to ensure that Great Yarmouth Borough Council maintains a structured approach to entering into new partnerships or membership to outside bodies

Detailed guidance is available from the Corporate Risk Officer.

1.1 Aims and objectives

The purpose of this framework is to provide guidance on:

- What partnership working is
- How to enter into a new partnership
- How to set up a new partnership
- How to maintain appropriate governance arrangements in existing partnerships
- How to exit from a partnership

The main reasons for entering into a partnership are:

- The desire to find new ways to share risk
- The ability to access new resources
- To provide new and better ways of delivering services and forge new relationships

1.2 Definition of a partnership working

Great Yarmouth Borough Council definition of a partnership is:

‘an agreement between two or more independent bodies to work collectively to achieve an objective’

For Great Yarmouth Borough Council this means:

- Elements of joint problem solving
- Shared Governance
- Collective responsibility
- Longer term mutual support
- Shared aims / vision and an interdependency

This framework does not cover:

- Procurements (unless they are delivering major services in a strategic arrangements)
- Informal discussion / consultation groups
- Short term arrangements

1.3 Policy statement

Great Yarmouth Borough Council is committed to working in partnership to deliver wider outcomes reaching the communities we serve.

We need to have a clear and consistent approach to partnership working in order to ensure that:

- We achieve best value in the provision of services
- We can plan to use resources effectively
- We can encourage innovative working and positive outcomes
- Community leadership and engagement is promoted effectively
- Partnership risks are being managed effectively
- Suitable business continuity arrangements are put in place where the loss of a partnership could adversely affect the ability to deliver critical services
- We can meet our statutory responsibilities where partnerships assist in the delivery of statutory services which are the responsibility of Great Yarmouth Borough Council.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council’s policy in relation to partnerships is to ensure that its formal partnership arrangements:

- Promote at least one of our corporate priorities and reflect our core values
- Provide mutual benefits for each partner in proportion to the contribution
- Satisfy our obligations to deliver value for money and comply with requirements for governance, risk management and probity
- Provide accountability where decisions are being made about expenditure of public money

1.4 Review

The framework will be reviewed at least every 3 years, by the Corporate Risk Officer (or more frequently if fundamental changes are required) and approved by Policy and Resources Committee. Subsequent to any such approval, the following parties shall be consulted:

- Corporate Risk Group
- Executive Leadership Team
- Audit and Risk Committee

The Corporate Risk Officer shall review the framework annually to ensure that details remain relevant and up to date. This review will not require re-endorsement of the policy.

Partnerships and membership to outside bodies should be regularly challenged in line with the terms of reference and classification of the partnership to ensure benefits are still being gained and the partnership is fit for purpose.

2.0 Partnership working

All partnerships should have a formal agreement. The process of agreeing a document is itself an important element of partnership governance; it will help clarify roles and relationships and build goodwill and trust.

Whilst there is no single form of document that will suit the size and scope of all partnerships, the main elements that should be considered are:

- Name of partnership and aims and objectives
- Membership, including status of different Board members
- Powers and roles
- Income and financial matters, including right of access of Internal Audit
- Meetings, minutes and decision making processes
- Timescales and amendments to rules
- Exit strategy

All proposed partnerships will require approval by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). Appendix 1 provides a checklist of information to be submitted to the ELT.

2.1 Roles and responsibilities

Lead Officer

All partnerships must have a nominated lead officer from GYBC who is responsible for the day to day relationship with the partner organisation and to provide a point of contact between the council and the partnership. The responsibilities of the lead officers are:

- To ensure that the partnership is added to the partnership register and any risks are logged.
- To ensure that the framework is applied to their partnership by following the guidance for governance and accountability for new and existing and for exiting a partnership
- To review performance against agreed procedures and targets and provide updates on partnerships that link into the Councils strategic objectives according to the partnership classification and terms of reference. To report, on an exception basis, if any issues arise between regular reports

- To carry out a review of the partnership governance arrangements in accordance with the terms of reference, progress with the partnership and/or any risk issues that may impact on the Council
- To put information about the partnership on our website and ask them to link to our website if they have one of their own and if appropriate.

Corporate Risk Officer

- To coordinate the Council's approach to partnership governance including quality assurance of adherence to this framework
- To prompt for updates to the Partnership Register
- To include updates on partnership working on an annual basis
- To review the Partnership Governance Framework and publish on the Council's Website and The Loop

Executive Leadership Team / Management Team

- To approve new partnerships
- To agree an effective partnership governance framework to manage partnership working across the Council
- To receive reports on individual partnerships that link into the Council's strategic objectives according to the partnership classification and terms of reference
- To have an overview of partnership working across the Council and to ensure that partnerships are properly supported, and resources are provided to allow partnerships to succeed
- To challenge outcomes and assist lead officers and heads of service to address any issues raised
- To identify learning from the past year and make recommendations as appropriate to ensure that the organisation benefits

Policy and Resources Committee

- To receive a report annually on the effectiveness of partnership arrangements
- To agree where necessary future direction and/or any actions arising from the evaluation
- To assess and challenge continued involvement in partnerships

Director of Finance

The Director of Finance is the strategic champion for partnership governance and is responsible for liaising with the budget holder on partnership governance issues.

- To advise on effective controls that will ensure that resources are not wasted.
- To advise on the key elements of funding a project. They include:
 - risk appraisal and management
 - resourcing, including taxation issues
 - audit, security and control requirements
 - carry-forward arrangements.
- To ensure that the accounting arrangements are satisfactory.

2.2 Entering into new partnerships where GYBC is not the lead body

When approached to enter into a partnership where Great Yarmouth Borough Council is not the lead organisation the lead officer should consider the following:

- Does it assist to deliver the Council's priorities as detailed in 'The Plan'?
- Does it have the appropriate governance arrangements?
- What resources will be required (time, money, stationery)?
- Does the withdrawal of a partner increase the financial risk?
- Will it be able to add value?
- Ensure decision making requirements are met prior to entering into the partnership

2.3 Setting up a new partnership where Great Yarmouth Borough Council is the lead body.

When developing a new partnership, you should be clear how the partnership can achieve your organisation's goals. It includes detailing:

- How many partnerships you need and the type of organisation you will partner with.
- What each partnership needs to deliver for you, your partners and the people of Great Yarmouth in line with community aspirations
- What resources you and your partners will need to achieve those aims
- The criteria to enable you to select and understand how to work with partners
- The activities can be focused on a service area or the whole organisation. In deciding the scale, consider key stakeholder, their authority and the level of sponsorship
- How the partnership will add value to existing arrangements
- Making sure the appropriate monitoring body is aware of the partnership

Organisations that approach partners without thorough completion of these matters risk the following outcomes:

- Partnership overload: Duplicate partnerships will be developed, and activity will not be co-ordinated across a number of business areas
- High failure rate during Partnership Development: Without clarity of why partnerships are being developed and what's in it for partners, negotiation can become difficult and often fail
- Over promising under delivering: Failing to recognise the resources needed to deliver the partnership and can lead to expectations being set which cannot be met
- Partnership fatigue: The true power of developing partnership which you couldn't do alone is lost and become a by-word for a range of relationships

The partnership must understand clearly what the partnership will deliver for itself and its partners, the resources needed and the actions to progress each partnership to launch. Included in this should be:

- Clear objectives linked to strategic aims and objectives
- A description of the proposition the partnership will deliver and its benefits for the organisation, each of the partners and the people of Great Yarmouth as a whole
- The detailed information that will enable stakeholders to understand the resources they will provide and those needed from partners
- An action plan through to the partnership's launch including structure, governance and terms of reference
- Legal and financial regulations

- Associated risks and issues

For partnerships that link into the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives the answers to the above questions should be documented in a short briefing note to ELT to ask for approval to proceed.

2.4 Exiting partnerships

All partnering arrangements have a life span and it is important to identify when they no longer meet the needs of the partner. When no longer effective the partnership should meet to discuss:

- The circumstances under which a partnership may be dissolved
- The legalities and financial implications / final account
- Any outstanding work or business
- End of partnership report
- Communication to stakeholders not directly involved in the management of the partnership
- Communication to the Council for removal from the Partnership Register

A clear exit strategy needs to be in place for both the planned and unplanned cessation of a partnership arrangement. An exit plan allows for:

- Minimal disruption
- Smooth transition (away from the partnership)
- No nasty surprises

3.0 Governance arrangements for partnerships

Governance should be proportionate to responsibilities and risks. Arrangements should promote financial and management accountability between partners and support good governance.

The main objective is to ensure a successful partnership that delivers high quality and cost effective services through ensuring robust governance and risk management practices are in place. Further guidance can be obtained from the Corporate Risk Officer.

Not all partnerships carry the same degree of risk. Appendix 2 sets out the definition and governance requirements for each classification of a partnership.

3.1 Partnership Register

A Partnership Register is maintained by the Corporate Risk Officer and published on The Loop. The register will be reviewed on a quarterly basis and presented to ELT / MT.

The partnership register main functions are:

- To provide an overview of the partnerships that the Council has and how these link to the council's Strategic, Corporate / Contractual and Operational objectives
- To provide a framework to allow a robust challenge and scrutiny of the partnerships and membership of outside bodies to take place
- To identify any group relationship (for accounting purposes) and/or any governance issues for exception reporting.

It is intended that partnerships will be managed at the service level but with an overview and challenge at corporate leadership level.

3.2 Partnership evaluation

Partnerships must be evaluated as per the partnership classification and terms of reference to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and continue to provide value for money.

This evaluation should be carried out by the lead officer and any issues noted in the partnership register. Any exceptions should be reported to the relevant Head of Service for reporting purposes if required.

3.3 Risk Management arrangements

Risk management is about identifying and managing significant obstacles and weaknesses that exist within the partnership. All partnerships, regardless of their size and scope should consider risk. For more significant partnerships a risk assessment and joint risk register maybe required which can also specify which agency or agencies are responsible for managing the action plan to reduce individual risks.

By knowing and understanding the risks, the partnerships will be better informed when it comes to setting priorities, policy making, financial planning and managing performance. A good place to start is by considering a few basic questions:

- What are the partnerships objectives?
- What things might stop the partnership from achieving their objectives?
- What, if anything, can be done to prevent things from happening?

When identifying partnership risks consideration should be given to doing this as a joint exercise with all partners.

Typical risks associated with partnership working are for example;

- Unclear governance arrangements
- Service delivery failures
- Incompatible systems and processes
- Lack of commitment from other partners
- Unclear financial and legal liabilities
- Differing cultures – poor relationships
- Failure of partners to perform

For more information, including useful prompts to the type of risks which partnerships might consider detailed guidance can be obtained from the Corporate Risk Officer.

3.4 Equality arrangements

All partnerships regardless of their size and scope should consider equality and diversity issues and agree a reasonable approach to equality analysis. For more information, including guidance and example of equality analysis template please contact the Equality Team.

A designated member of the partnership management group should be identified as having responsibility for ensuring consideration of equality and diversity issues with appropriate recording and review.

3.5 Information sharing arrangements

Where partnership arrangements involve sharing, storing or collecting of information, responsibility needs to be assigned and appropriate controls put in place. You must ensure that there is a legal requirement to share this information and further guidance can be sought from the Council Senior Information and Performance Manager.

3.6 Performance management arrangements

Monitoring and reporting should take place within the partnership to understand how it is progressing. This should include review of:

- Progress against milestones
- Performance against key indicators
- Progress against budgets
- Actions from annual review where appropriate
- Progress against key actions
- Performance on managing risk
- Governance arrangements

Slippage or deviation in agreed key performance indicators must be reported back to the partnership and consideration given to exception reporting to the Council if appropriate.

There is an expectation that the Council will only become involved in partnerships that have in place at least basic arrangements for performance management. Partnerships with more formal workload, more onerous responsibilities and larger resources will have more sophisticated performance management arrangements in place. Lead officers on partnerships should consider aligning these arrangements with the Council's own performance management system.

Reviewing the partnership will provide assurance that proper systems are in place and that the partnership's outcomes and performance can be monitored and evaluated. It will also provide the partnership with reassurance about the effectiveness and value of its own input, and whether our requirements are being met.

3.7 Financial management arrangements

The Council has its own financial regulations and the financial arrangements in a partnership should not contradict this but seek to encapsulate those standards.

Financial issues should be considered when setting up or entering into a partnership. Some partnerships may not have any financial accountability. Further guidance can be obtained from the Director of Finance. The arrangements must set out:

- The accountable organisation
- Level of reporting
- Procedure for authorisation of expenditure
- Frequency of reporting
- Procedures for expenditure decisions

Frequency will depend on statutory requirements, size and accountability of each partnership.

Partnerships are often set up as a result of Government initiatives and funded by a grant. Upon cessation of the grant the Council may be expected to include these projects into the Councils day to day business therefore you need to be aware of potential funding shortfalls, loss of assets etc. A clear exit strategy needs to be in place for both planned and unplanned occasion of a partnership arrangement.

Document Retention: it should be identified who is going to be responsible for holding documents and for that party to be aware of the legal requirements of retaining documents for various statutory and grant body requirement periods.

3.8 Code of conduct

Board members and staff will observe the Council's Codes of Conduct for members and officers and Behaviours Framework, which include disclosure of personal interest, register of hospitality and the Protocol on gifts and hospitality. Many other partnership members will have their own standards and codes from employing bodies to follow, it is important that each partnership design their own shared codes of conduct that all members can agree to conform to.

Employees are also reminded of the Whistleblowing Policy. This policy is intended to encourage and enable employees to raise serious concerns within the Council rather than overlooking a problem or 'blowing the whistle' outside. This policy document makes it clear that you can do so without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. This policy applies equally to the work that staff do within partnerships.

Employees are also reminded of the Council's Safeguarding Policy. This policy sets out the Council's protection procedures and specifies the roles and responsibilities of the Council's representatives for whom this policy and procedures is mandatory. This policy applies equally to the work that staff do within partnerships.

Appendix 1: Checklist for ELT Approval

	Requirement	Attached
1	Name of Partnership	
2	Why is the Partnership required/what value does it add	
2	Membership	
3	Powers and Roles (inc agreed key performance indicators)	
4	Budget/Financial Exposure	
5	Governance (audit, financial, annual review)	
6	Meetings	
7	GYBC Resource requirements (staff, time)	
8	Risk profile (reputation, cost, outcomes)	
9	Classification (Strategic, Corporate, Operational)	
10.	Exit Strategy	

Appendix 2: Partnership Classification, Definition and Operational Requirements

	Strategic – help to delivery corporate vision and values	Corporate - support or connect and relate to borough as a whole	Operational / Contractual - Service providing a service
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered as part of GYBC Corporate Strategy High value May impact reputation/service if not delivered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impacts / related to more than one service Medium resource commitment Significant reputational impact if not delivered Statutory Requirement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linked to key service delivery Delivered by single service/team Contributes to service delivery Delivering Statutory or optional service High reputational impact if not delivered
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership Agreement in place Operational / implementation plan in place Risks understood and mitigated Regular stakeholder meetings take place, issues logged Six monthly performance reports provided to ELT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership Agreement in place Operational / implementation plan in place Risks understood and mitigated Regular stakeholder meetings take place, issues logged Annual performance reports provided to ELT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working practices understood and agreed Resources managed to ensure effective working Head of Service provides appropriate management and oversight Performance updates provided to the Management Team as appropriate