

REVIEW OF SIGNIFICANT PARTNERSHIPS

The purpose of this report is to provide Audit Committee with an assessment of governance and risk management arrangements within significant partnerships with which the Council is engaged, in order to provide assurance to Audit Committee that effective arrangements are in place for the management of principal risk exposures.

Background

Partnerships are increasingly playing a major role in securing the delivery of services nationally, regionally and locally. Central government is particularly keen to promote joint working across different areas of not only the Public Sector but also the Private, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sectors. This method of working has assumed a much greater emphasis and importance in the activities of local authorities in service delivery, given its increased profile in policy development. So far as the Council is concerned, the Council has fully participated in Partnership working to ensure achievement of its strategic objectives.

If planned and developed properly, partnerships can bring significant benefits to the deliver of services, as set out below.

- Better outcomes of customers, clients, communities, members, vulnerable people particularly with respect to multi dimensional issues, e.g. Community Safety;
- Greater economies of scale and reduction in duplication;
- Different perspectives and experience in approaching problems;
- More effective use and allocation of resources;
- Increased data and skills sharing to inform decisions and improved understanding;
- Improved local support and engagement;
- Mobilising additional resources;
- Broadening of staff development to enhance performance;
- Increased public perception, i.e. seamless approach;
- Better sharing and management of risk; and
- Stronger voice / lobbying.

The Corporate Assessment contained within the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process measures the Council's ability to engage and lead communities, deliver community priorities in partnership with others and ensure continuous improvement. These Key Lines of Enquiry within the CPA strongly promote joint working including across local boundaries and the Council's approach in this area will reflect on the overall rating of the performance of the Council as a whole. The new Corporate Area Assessment also picks up on these themes, with a greater emphasis on outcomes.

Partnerships in Peterborough

When the Council works in partnerships, it has a methodology which ensures that there is a common vision underpinning the work of the partnership that is understood and agreed by all partners. The Council works in many different partnerships, ranging from the strategic to the operational. The overarching vision for partnership working is supported by the Local Area Agreement. The Local Area Agreement sets out a range of outcomes that Peterborough and its various partnerships aim to achieve supported by clear, measurable targets and indicators. The constitution establishes a Partnership Framework which aims to ensure that all potential partnerships to be entered into by the Council have a common vision and clear objectives.

During 2007, an exercise was undertaken to establish the numbers, and types of partnerships within Peterborough. In addition, various training was provided in conjunction with Zurich Municipal to consider and understand risks that could be associated with such arrangements. Over 100 partnerships have been identified, although some of these can probably be assessed as contractor arrangements rather than a partnership in its purest terms.

Overall, it is considered that there are four key partnerships within Peterborough, these being:

- Opportunity Peterborough;
- Greater Peterborough Partnership;
- Peterborough Primary Care Trust; and
- The development of the Children's Trust.

Accountability agreements are in place for various governance arrangements have been adopted. These cover such areas as responsibilities, reporting lines, how services will be provided, arrangements regarding funding, how decisions will be made, regularity of meetings, how openness and transparency is to be achieved, audit requirements, arrangements in relation to the secondment of staff and holding and sharing information.

Other areas covered include performance management, financial budgeting, planning and management, accountable body responsibilities and risk management.

The Council is seeking to put in place it's own risk register for each of the significant partnerships it is involved in (and those shared with Partners) and is contributing to the monitoring, or production of each Partnership's own risk register.

Internal Audit has developed a Partnership Toolkit in order to assist in the review and governance arrangements for all current and future partnerships, and has been used to review the Greater Dogsthorpe Partnership.