

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL	
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Report of:	Director of Legal and Governance Services
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Relevant Executive Member:	Executive Member for Finance and Governance
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Submitted to:	Audit Committee
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Date:	14 December 2023
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Title:	Partnership Governance – annual assurance report
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Report for:	Information
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Status:	Public
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Strategic priority:	All
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Key decision:	Not applicable
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Why:	Not applicable
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Urgent:	Not applicable
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Why:	Not applicable
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Proposed decision(s)	That the Audit Committee notes the information set out within this report and the planned next steps.
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Executive summary	<p>This report sets out the arrangements in place to assess the health of existing key, strategic partnerships where Middlesbrough Council is a member, in some form.</p>
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Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the results of the annual assessment of the key partnerships that Middlesbrough council is a member of, against the Council's Partnership Governance Policy and supporting minimum standard.

Recommendations

2. That the Committee:
 - Notes the current position of the Council in relation to compliance with the Partnership Governance policy.
 - Notes the planned actions to strengthen governance in relation to performance management.

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3. These ongoing actions will support good practice in the Council's partnership governance arrangements.

Background and relevant information

4. The Partnership Governance Policy has been in place since it was approved by Executive in February 2020.
5. The policy defines a partnership as 'an arrangement in which the Council agrees to collaborate with one or more legally independent organisations to achieve shared objectives and outcomes'.
6. Partnerships are key to the Council achieving its strategic objectives and their importance will inevitably increase in the coming years. It is critical that partnerships are managed with the same diligence as the internal activity described above to ensure that their contribution to the Council's strategic aims and priorities are maximised.
7. The key elements of the policy are:
 - Each partnership will have a lead manager of appropriate seniority.
 - The business case for a partnership will be approved by the appropriate body in the Council before the Council formally enters into a partnership agreement.
 - All agreed partnerships will meet a minimum standard, with the level of detail required to be determined by the significance of the partnership in strategic and financial terms. This will include, for example, the partnership vision, aims and objectives, KPIs, governance arrangements, resourced action plan, and monitoring, review and dissolution processes. All formal partnership agreements and structures must be approved by Legal Services.
 - A partnership register will be maintained that lists and defines all partnerships, setting out how they contribute to the Council's strategic aims and priorities.
 - An annual review of the performance of significant partnerships will be integrated with the Council's performance management reporting and be informed by an assessment of the lead manager.
 - Training and guidance for those employees engaged in collaborative working will be provided.

Partnership Governance Register and Framework

8. The Partnership Governance Register assesses the health of existing partnerships across the following principles:
- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law
 - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
 - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
 - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
 - Developing the partnership's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
 - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
 - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

2022 Partnership Governance Register and improvement activity update

9. Within the first annual assurance report on Partnerships governance in September 2022, a number of activities were outlined for delivery in the following year to strengthen the governance of four partnerships. The table below provides an update on that activity (excluding one action which is set out in the table in paragraph 11 as it was not due for delivery until December 2023).

Partnership	Issue	Completed activity
South Tees Health and Wellbeing Board	There are currently no Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in place to measure delivery of the current overarching strategy although longer term targets exist and there are detailed metrics to measure delivery of supporting strategies	Action due to be delivered in December 2023. See 2023 activity for update on delivery.
Middlesbrough Community Safety Partnership	Performance metrics are in place however only 50% of them are on target, therefore this has been identified as amber because of performance however a number of metrics are not within the direct control of the partnership	A review of KPIs was completed as part of the planned refresh of the Community Safety Plan.
Middlesbrough Children's Trust	KPIs to measure impact have started to be developed	KPIs and performance management framework put in place for the partnership.
Middlesbrough Children's Improvement Board	KPIs are in place and performance is at 90% which is the target, however the board was assessed as amber because it is in place as a result of OFSTED determining that Children's services in Middlesbrough were inadequate in 2019	The service has continued to deliver improvements and the latest OFSTED inspection resulted in an improved outcome of 'Requires improvement'.
South Tees Safeguarding Children's Partnership	There are currently no KPIs in place to measure performance across the statutory partners, although the Council has performance monitors its work in relation to this area.	Development of arrangements to set out how the statutory partners will work together to identify and respond to the needs of children in the area and how the effectiveness of this work will be measured.
North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO)	Although there is a business plan in place and the financial savings achieved from being within the partnership are kept under review, there is no wider set of KPIs in place to assess it.	This action will be completed when the annual assurance report on procurement activity is considered.

Partnership	Issue	Completed activity
		<p>at the December 2023 meeting of Audit Committee.</p> <p>The action is to embed within the next annual assurance report on procurement to Audit Committee to set out the positive impact of membership of NEPO and explore creation of a performance data set with NEPO.</p>

2023 Partnership Governance Register:

10. Lead officers have completed a self-assessment for each of the 13 significant partnerships that existed during 2022/23, which have been assessed as follows:

Name of partnership or separate legal entity	Statutory	Significant	Governance	Performance
Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA)	Yes	Yes	Green	Green
River Tees Port Health Authority Board	Yes	Yes	Green	Green
South Tees Health and Wellbeing Board	Yes	Yes	Green	Green
North East Migration Partnership	No	Yes	Amber	Green
Middlesbrough Community Safety Partnership	Yes	Yes	Green	Green
Middlesbrough Children's Trust	No	Yes	Green	Amber
Childrens Services Executive Improvement Board	No	Yes	Green	Amber
South Tees Safeguarding Children's Partnership	Yes	Yes	Green	Green
Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board	Yes	Yes	Green	Green
Middlesbrough Environment City Trust Limited	No	No	Green	Green
North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO)	No	Yes	Green	Green
Cleveland Local Resilience Forum (LRF)	Yes	Yes	Green	Green
Youth Offending Executive Management Board	Yes	Yes	Green	Green

2023/4 improvement activity

11. While partnerships are assessed as being generally in a sound state by the lead officers who self-assessed compliance with governance standards, some marked performance as amber where outcomes are less able to be articulated or because performance is below target / below national average. The position in relation to each of the partnerships identified as amber for performance and planned actions to address that status are set out below. All four were also identified as amber when last reported to this committee in September 2022. The table below also contains an update on the planned actions that were to be delivered during 2023/4:

Partnership	Issue	Planned action	Target date	LMT lead
South Tees Health and Wellbeing Board	There are currently no Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in place to measure delivery of the current overarching strategy although longer term	This is a significant piece of work which commenced in 2022 as a planned action with the target date of December	December 2023	South Tees Joint Director of Public Health/South Tees Integration Programme Manager

Partnership	Issue	Planned action	Target date	LMT lead
	targets exist and there are detailed metrics to measure delivery of supporting strategies	2023 put in place at that time. Work is ongoing to ensure the planned refresh of the overarching South Tees Strategy in 2023 includes a supporting performance management framework will be development to measure the effectiveness of actions to address health inequalities.		
North East Migration Partnership	The partnership has had some capacity issues during 2022/23 and is also continuing to improve its governance arrangements.	Code of Conduct will be developed & additional staffing to add capacity around data and governance improvements	31/12/2023	Director of Environment and Communities
Middlesbrough Children's Trust	KPIs to measure impact have started to be developed	The Partnership are currently in the process of developing a new set of priorities. The previous 3 priorities are operated as BAU.	Complete	Director of Education and Partnerships/Head of Partnerships
Middlesbrough Children's Improvement Board	KPIs are in place and performance is at 90% which is the target, however the board was assessed as amber because it is in place as a result of OFSTED determining that Children's services in Middlesbrough require improvement issued March 2023.	Continue to deliver activities to further improve practice to move the Council out of intervention.	Ongoing	Director of Children's Services

12. During 2024, the Council's Partnership Governance Policy will be refreshed to ensure it aligns with a forthcoming Partnerships Strategy that will be developed to support delivery of the Council's transformation agenda in order to ensure the Council is working effectively with partners to maximise impact on the priorities of the town, as set out in the forthcoming Council Plan.

Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended

13. Not applicable.

Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Financial

14. It is anticipated that all activities set out in this report are achievable within existing and planned budgets.

Legal

15. The proposed activity is consistent with and will promote the achievement of the Council’s legal duty to achieve Best Value.

Risk

16. This report highlights current compliance with the Partnership Governance policy and planned actions to improve partnership governance. If delivered successfully this will have a positive impact on the following risk:

- If the **Council and its partners do not have the collective capacity to deliver system wide change to key issues** such as public health, crime and safeguarding, then this could result in the population’s health, wellbeing and safety declining.

Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion

17. There are no concerns that this report could have an adverse impact on these rights.

Climate Change / Environmental

18. There are no concerns that this report, which is for information only, could have an impact on this.

Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers

19. There are no concerns that this report, which is for information only, could have an impact on this.

Data Protection / GDPR

20. There are no concerns that this report, which is for information only, could have an impact on this.

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Delivery of planned activity for 2023 set out in the body of the report	Various	Various

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Executive	Delivering the Strategic Plan	18 February 2020
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Partnership Governance Annual Assurance report	23 September 2023

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