



## Partnership Governance Policy

<b>Creator</b>	Author(s)	Ann-Marie Johnstone, Head of Governance, Policy and Information (SIRO)		
	Approved by	Executive		
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	Head of Service	Ann-Marie Johnstone		
	Director	Charlotte Benjamin		
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**Contact:** [Ann-Marie\\_Johnstone@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:Ann-Marie_Johnstone@middlesbrough.gov.uk)

## Summary

1. This policy is part of the corporate governance policy framework underpinning the Council's Council Plan and sets out how the Council will develop and manage partnerships in support of its strategic priorities for the town.
2. The following sections outline:
  - the purpose of this policy
  - definitions
  - scope
  - the legislative and regulatory framework
  - policy statement
  - roles and responsibilities
  - supporting policies, procedures and standards; and
  - monitoring and review arrangements.

## Purpose

3. Partnerships are key to the Council achieving its strategic objectives. Effective partnership working is critical if we are to maximise our ability to affect change by working with whoever is best placed to deliver solutions that improve outcomes.
4. The purpose of this policy is to set out a corporate approach to partnership governance to ensure there is an effective, consistent and joined-up approach across the organisation.
5. This will deliver the following benefits:
  - ensure that proactive partnership governance is embedded within the culture of the Council, and is integral to its business planning and performance management
  - ensure that the partnership governance cycle is implemented consistently and proportionately across the Council
  - ensure that partnerships comply with the requirements of the Council's Constitution, and
  - communicate the Council's approach to partnerships to all employees and stakeholders.
6. Effective implementation of this policy will ensure that the Council understands its partnerships, how they contribute to strategic priorities, promote good governance in their operations and continuous improvement in their performance and risk management disciplines.

## Definitions

<b>Corporate governance</b>	The systems, processes and values by which local authorities operate and by which they engage with, and are held accountable to, their communities and stakeholders.
<b>Partnership</b>	An arrangement in which the Council agrees to collaborate with one or more legally independent organisations to achieve shared objectives and outcomes.

**Scope**

7. This policy applies to all arrangements of the Council meeting the corporate definition of partnership outlined in this policy: an arrangement in which the Council agrees to collaborate with one or more legally independent organisations to achieve shared objectives and outcomes.
8. The policy applies to all elected members, employees (both permanent and temporary), contractors and consultants working for or on behalf of the Council in a partnership environment.
9. Where the Council is not lead partner, lead managers must ensure that arrangements are in line with the key principles of this policy.
10. Client and contractor relationships can be considered partnerships if they are of strategic or reputational importance to the Council, or responsible for significant public funds.
11. The following arrangements are not considered to be partnerships:
  - where the Council has complete control over decisions and funds decision-making;
  - where grants or payments are made to other organisations for services;
  - where subscriptions are made to outside bodies; or
  - procurement agreements governed under contract.

**Legislative and regulatory framework**

12. Key elements of the legislative and regulatory framework relevant to partnership governance are set out below.

<b>Local Government Act 1999</b>	General requirement to achieve best value for money. The effective governance of partnerships reduces unnecessary expenditure and increases the likelihood of delivering organisational priorities.
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**Policy Statement**

13. Each existing or prospective partnership will have a lead manager of appropriate seniority. The lead manager will be responsible for ensuring that partnerships are developed, governed and reviewed in line with this policy.
14. If the partnership is discretionary, then the business case for its development must be justified, and approved by the appropriate body in the Council before the Council formally enters into any partnership agreement.
15. The business case must clear how the proposed partnership will contribute to the Council’s strategic priorities in a way that cannot be achieved through an existing arrangement. It should also address how any similar partnerships may be amended or discontinued in light of the proposed new arrangement to reduce the risk of overlapping remits.
16. All formal partnership agreements and structures (incorporated partnerships or other)

will be agreed by the Monitoring Officer prior to approval.

17. All partnerships will be assessed against the governance standards set out in the Partnership Governance Framework underpinning this policy where applicable, with governance proportionate to the significance of the partnership in strategic and financial terms.
18. Partnership risks will be incorporated within the Council's risk registers where appropriate, in line with the Council's Risk and Opportunity Management Policy. It is the responsibility of the lead officer for each partner to identify where this is necessary.
19. The Council will maintain a partnership register that lists and defines all partnerships, setting out how they contribute to the Council's strategic aims and priorities. This will identify significant partnerships i.e. those that are fundamental to the delivery of strategic priorities, or meeting the Council's key decision threshold in terms of financial commitments. It will also capture key statutory partnerships.
20. An annual review of all partnerships will be undertaken, informed by an assessment of lead managers against a standard template, through which the governance and performance of the Council's partnerships will be RAG-rated and any changes recorded. This review will inform the Council's Annual Governance Statement cycle.

### Roles and key responsibilities

<b>Executive</b>	Overall responsibility for partnership governance across the Council, including approving the Partnership Governance Policy and the creation of significant partnerships, and ensuring that partnership performance is managed, monitored and reviewed regularly.
<b>Elected members</b>	Members may be appointed to partnership boards and will scrutinise the performance of partnerships in line with this policy. Members must be aware of their responsibilities under the Local Code of Corporate Governance and Codes of Conduct for members and employees and ensure that the partnerships that they are involved in comply with this policy, reporting to their Group Leader and the Monitoring Officer if they consider this is not to be the case.
<b>Audit Committee</b>	Review the effectiveness of partnership governance and receive an annual assurance report on progress being made.
<b>Leadership Team</b>	Considers and approves all business cases for partnerships, ensuring that they align with the Council's strategic objectives, and reviewing quarterly performance updates and the annual partnership assessment.
<b>Legal Services</b>	Provides advice on partnership models and governance arrangements where appropriate and signs off all formal arrangements prior to approval.

<b>Finance team</b>	Provide financial input to the financial considerations that must be taken into account when establishing and managing partnerships as set out in the Financial Regulations, Section H, External arrangements 101 – 103.
<b>Governance, Policy and information Service</b>	Maintains the partnership register, maintain and communicates the Partnership Governance Framework, coordinates the annual partnership assessment.
<b>Partnership Leads</b>	Project manage the development of the partnership; act as the key point of contact between the Council and the partnership and promote the partnership within the Council; responsible for registering the partnership with Strategy, Information and Governance, providing quarterly performance updates and completing the annual partnership assessment.
<b>Officers working in partnership</b>	Officers working in partnerships must be aware of their responsibilities under the Local Code of Corporate Governance and Codes of Conduct for members and employees, and ensure that the partnerships that they are involved in comply with this policy, reporting to the Partnership Lead if they consider this is not to be the case.

### Supporting policies, procedures and standards

21. The following policies, procedures and standards are in place that support effective partnership governance.

<b>Information Governance Framework</b>	Sets out a framework for effective information governance within the Council, meeting all legal obligations and underpinning the achievement of strategic objectives.
<b>Risk and Opportunity Management Policy</b>	Sets out how the Council will ensure that risks are effectively managed and opportunities exploited to maximise delivery of strategic objectives, fully integrated with performance management arrangements.
<b>Performance Management Policy</b>	Sets out how the Council will ensure that performance is effectively managed to deliver strategic priorities for the town.
<b>Programme and Project Management Policy</b>	Sets out how the Council will manage its portfolio of programmes and projects to ensure delivery to scope, cost, time and quality.

### Monitoring and Review Arrangements

22. The Council’s expectations around partnership working are clearly set out within its corporate values and associated staff performance frameworks.

23. All managers and employees are required to comply with this Partnership Governance

Policy to ensure that the Council effectively develops and manages partnerships in support of its strategic priorities for the town.

24. An annual assurance report on the Council's partnerships arrangements will be submitted to Audit Committee. This will be supported by a targeted internal audits as appropriate, which will be listed in the Council's annual audit plan.
25. The implementation and effectiveness of this policy and its supporting procedures will be reviewed on an annual basis, using the governance assessments completed by leads of each of the partnerships.
26. This policy will be reviewed every three years, unless there is significant development that would require a more urgent review e.g. new legislation.

## Appendix 1

### Partnership Governance Standards

Annually, the health of partnerships should be assessed using the CIPFA 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' guidance as a framework to assess the following broad principles:

- Whether the partnership behaves with integrity, demonstrating a strong commitment to ethical values and the rule of law
- How the partnership ensures compliance with the principles of openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
- Determining the interventions necessary to optimize 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.

Within every formal partnership the following should exist, where they are applicable:

- A clear statement on aims and purpose, legal status and obligations
- Targets, objectives and outcomes and that they should be accompanied by milestones;
- Risks to the effectiveness of the partnership should be recorded and monitored
- Documented decision making and accountability rules that align with the agreed remit of the partnership and the council's constitution
- Documented meetings schedule and nominated deputies
- Agreement of the partner responsibilities and financial liabilities associated with the partnership.
- Clear and transparent financial and resourcing arrangements for finances and staffing resources
- Dispute resolution procedures and exit strategy
- An annual review of the partnership through the updating of the Partnership governance register which includes a health assessment
- Alignment with the Council's minimum standards for programme and projects where the Council is the lead partner
- An assessment completed on an annual basis of the health of the partnership.