

(PROPOSED)

Partnership Policy

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Partnership Policy

Summary

South Derbyshire District Council is committed to working in effective and efficient partnerships. Partnership working is a valuable mechanism for targeting cross-cutting policy and operational issues. It can be an effective and efficient means of sharing limited resources. Sometimes, the working arrangements can only be justified when the partnership's achievements outweigh the costs involved (both in terms of staff and financial resources).

Due to increasing pressure on public finances, changes in government policy and local needs, the scope and number of partnerships are increasing. Therefore, it is essential that the Council evaluates its partnerships on a regular basis to ensure that they are fully contributing to improvements in service delivery and that they are operating in an effective and efficient way.

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

The policy outlines the Council's vision and scope for partnership working; providing clarity of the types of partnerships the Council is involved with and guidance to assist in making decisions regarding setting up or joining partnerships.

The Council will maintain, evaluate and co-ordinate each of its partnerships through a 'Partnership Register.'

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 new partnership and reviewing existing arrangements.

For clarity, a partnership checklist (Partnership Information Form, outlined at Appendix 1) has been developed and must be completed by the Head of Service 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. The policy does not apply to the Council's relationship with services - third party service providers or the wide range of organisations that the Council has informal working relations with, 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 partnership, 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; and
- The principles outlined in the Council's '*Equalities & Fairness Scheme*' are reflected within its work.

Vision

“To ensure that the Partnerships the Council is involved in; are managed in an efficient and effective way; focusing on outcomes and actions that support the Council in delivering 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 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; and
- Time scales for review or lifespan of the 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 to work together, develop, 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; and,
- Be prepared to accept decisions made by the partnership within the agreed parameters.

To summarise, a partnership can be as small as just two partners and may be established to deliver a focused, time limited project. They can be statutory (e.g. Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership) or where membership is mandatory for the Council.

Contractual Arrangements

These are defined as an arrangement made by the Council with a third party to deliver a service on its behalf, and where the Council and the service provider do not have a shared objective, such as 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

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

For instance where the Council:

- Undertakes an advisory role or seeks to gain a wider view in order to inform developments within the Council, such as membership of an environmental forum.
- Provides funding over a fixed period in return for an agreed set of actions, such as community funding agreements or grants with the voluntary sector.

Shared Services

These provide a mechanism for the Council to arrange for the discharge of its functions by another local authority.

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;
- 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 for the need of 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 values;
- 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 the Head of Corporate Services for consideration and approval and 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 partnerships outlined above. The purpose of this is to provide:

- A mechanism for reviewing partnership involvement.
- 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 the Head of Corporate Service and made accessible to all Officers and Members via the intranet.

Note: The Partnership Register will not include contracts or shared service partnerships

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;
- Expected frequency and locations of meetings/inputs;
- Likely 'life span' of partnership;
- Diversity and equality issues ;
- Members declaration of interests;
- Complaints procedure;
- Details of any specific expectations / inputs from the Council; and
- 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 process.

Action: A 'Term of Reference' or 'Partnership Agreement' is required for each partnership. Please forward a copy to Head of Corporate Services.

Working in Partnership

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

Membership, activities and outputs of all partnerships will be assessed annually by SMT and Leading Members to ensure their continuing relevance and 'added value' to the Council's strategic objectives. This will also provide an opportunity for the effectiveness of key 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 resources are required, agreement must be sought from SMT 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, observe the Council's Codes of Conduct. In 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. 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. 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, please contact the Head of Corporate Services.

Risk Management

Any risks associated with the membership of a partnership will be identified in the Partnership Information Form (**Appendix 1**). 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 SMT?

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 the Council?
- Does the partnership have its own auditing arrangements? Is it considered within the Council's audit programme?

Risk Assessment

- If the Council **is** the lead authority or lead partner within the partnership. – Has a risk assessment been completed using the Council's scoring matrix, looking at the business risks arising from the partnerships 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: If further clarification is required, please contact the Head of Corporate Services.

Review and Evaluation

Each partnership should be reviewed on a regular basis to provide assurance:

- that proper systems are in place
- of its effectiveness and value
- Its outcomes and performance can be monitored and evaluated.

The lead officer or Member is required to complete an assessment of the partnership and submit this information to the Head of Corporate Service for reference purposes.

The Assessment Form is outlined in **Appendix 3**. A summary of this information will be provided on an annual basis to SMT for consideration.

Internal Audit will undertake spot checks of individual partnership documentation to ensure partnerships meet the Council's requirements and to provide an independent assessment for SMT.

Action: For each Partnership, please complete a Partnership Information form and forward a copy to the Head of Corporate Services.

A clear exit strategy must be in place for all partnerships, even if it is known that the partnership has a limited life span, or to generally reduce the risks to the Council and other partners involved in the partnership.

On cessation of the partnership, an evaluation highlighting the lessons learnt and main outcomes achieved should be undertaken by the lead officer / Member.

The key findings should be submitted to the Head of Corporate Services for information.

A copy of the evaluation report will be circulated to SMT 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 Head of Corporate Services

Changing representatives

Where an Officer / Member replace 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 an ideal opportunity to review and evaluate the value of the partnership if it should be continued with.

The Partnership Register

The Partnership Register will be maintained by the Head of Corporate Services on behalf of the Council.

The Partnership Register will exclude contractual arrangements and shared services.

The Register will be established in the following order of priority:

- Statutory Partnerships
- Non-Statutory Partnerships
 - Community based Partnerships
 - Network Groups/Forums

The responsibility for ensuring the information for each Partnership is up to date rests with the lead officer or Member on the partnership from the Council. The Head of Corporate Services should be advised in writing of any changes to a partnership. If there are significant changes, the Head of Corporate Services will determine if these changes should be considered by the SMT before approval. (E.g. changes to funding, purpose of the partnership etc.)

The Partnership Register is to be updated on an annual basis and at the same time consistent with the service planning process (around May/June). A report and updated Partnership Register will then be considered by SMT and Leading Members

Action: The Head of Corporate Services 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 the Partnership:

Which other organisations are members?

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

Council resources required – Year on Year (Members /staff time, funding etc):

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

Likely location /Frequency of meetings:

Details of risks for the Authority:

Details to be entered into the Council's Risk scorecard

Date Formed :		Proposed End Date (if any):	
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	Yes	No
Is this Partnership Statutory?		
Does the partnership have a Partnership Agreement? (e.g. constitution / terms of reference)		

If 'Yes' please attach a copy to this form and briefly describe the type of agreement.

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If an Agreement is not in place, please ensure one is set up as soon as possible and submitted to the Head of Corporate Services.

Additional Information /comments:

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South Derbyshire District Council representative (s):

Name	
Date started	
Date finished	

Performance Review Details

To be reviewed at least annually by the Head of Corporate Services for agreement by the SMT

Date:	Reviewed by:
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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 or parent groups):

Resourcing & Funding arrangements (including specific implications for Council):

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

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

Exit Strategies (Arrangements if/when partnership ceases):

Governance Arrangements:

Details of any specific expectations /inputs from the Council:

Financial control, procedures, audit and accountability:

Equalities & Diversity:

Expected frequency of meetings /inputs:

Complaints Procedure:

Likely duration of the 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	EVIDENCE (Please indicate where evidence can be found, in order to demonstrate position)
1. Action & Outcome focused	The Partnership has clear purpose, agreed vision, targets and milestones. Can demonstrate that it is delivering improvements to quality of life and supports the Council's Strategic Objectives					
2. Well governed	The Partnership has documented governance arrangements and mechanisms in place to minimise financial and legal risks					
3. Good Leadership	The Partnership has clear leadership. Partners harness their energies to achieve more than they could on their own					
4. Efficient	The Partnership has effective agenda management, admin support arrangements and uses resources productively					
5. Inclusive	The Partnership actively promotes equality and diversity, and involves service users and key stakeholders as appropriate					

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, in order to demonstrate position)
6. Outward focused	The partnership is aware of the wider context within which it operates and has clear links and relationships					
7. Committed to learning & Development	The partnership learns from best practice, encourages learning and development and is willing to change					
8. Effective performance management	The partnership has a clear performance management system in place, can demonstrate progress on its targets and shares information					
9. Trust	The partnership has good supportive working relationships between partners. Risks and rewards are shared.					
10. Regularly evaluates	The partnership regularly reviews its membership, policies and has strategies that are clearly evidenced based, using sources such as consultation and statistics					

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. It 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 forward a copy of the evaluation report to the Head of Corporate Services.

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?