

## **Partnerships Update**

### **Summary**

1. This report sets out work that is ongoing as part of an action plan to ensure that the council has a methodology and approach to ensure that partnerships operate effectively. This means that the council will assess the importance and risk that partnerships present and ensure that an appropriate level of visibility and governance is in place. Work will also be undertaken to ensure that decisions continue to be made in line with the council constitution.
2. Audit & Governance Committee are asked to note the progress made and a further report will be brought to committee in April 2015 when the majority of actions will have been implemented.

### **Background**

3. The council wants to participate in strong and co-operative partnerships that provide good outcomes for York's residents. Sometimes the council will run partnerships and on other occasions it will be a participant. It is key that the council enters into partnerships in a way that avoids risk (both financial and reputational) and follows the correct financial and legal protocols.
4. The approach to partnerships has changed significantly in local government over recent years. Most local authorities have moved away from a city wide LSP (Local Strategic Partnership), in our case Without Walls. They have been replaced in part with new strategic partnerships such as the Health & Wellbeing Board or different less formal partnerships. We recognise that the council will increasingly work in partnership to deliver its outcomes and therefore needs to ensure that it has a flexible approach to how it works with others. But that flexibility must always be underpinned by a need for good governance, transparency and adherence to

the council's financial regulations and decision making protocols. We recognise that we need to ensure effective use of officer and partner time.

5. Partnerships are extremely hard to define as there are many, many definitions. The council is already involved in a wide variety of different partnerships ranging from and including voluntary partnerships; statutory partnerships; executive and non-executive partnerships; strategic delivery and strategic partnering for private sector purchases.
6. Where partnerships are statutory, there is clear guidance on the governance and meeting processes/protocols to be followed. Non statutory partnerships tend to be less formal but still require good governance and processes. In relation to the Without Walls Partnership and sub groups, the council revised the governance arrangements 18 months ago to try and ensure that good governance arrangements were in place, particularly where the council no longer provided secretariat support. This guidance has had mixed success.
7. Work (set out below) is ongoing to try and ensure that the council undertakes an assessment of each partnership to determine what the appropriate level of governance should be. As part of this assessment, it will be determined whether the council will provide or contribute to the secretariat support that the partnership requires.

### **Action Plan**

8. The council committed to a range of actions to improve partnership working. They include;
  - Establishment of a directory of partnerships
  - Visibility of the agendas and papers for significant partnerships on the council website
  - Revised Guidance
  - Review of administrative/secretariat support to statutory boards
9. **Directory of Partnerships.** We recognised that there is not a single definitive list of all the partnerships that the council is

participating in. By 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014, a full list will be available on a new partnership's portal on the CYC website. It will hold details of the partnership, frequency of meeting and the contact details of a council officer who either supports or attends the partnership.

10. **Visibility of Agendas/Papers.** Although the agenda and papers for statutory boards are available on the council or linked websites, there are other significant boards where the papers are not readily available. By 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015, we will have a new web based calendar that will provide the opportunity for partnership board agendas and papers to be posted. It has to be recognised that although the council has the ability to ensure that papers are posted for meetings that it supports, there will be a need for partners to agree to post agendas and documents.
11. **Revised Guidance.** There is a significant amount of partnership guidance available to council staff. However it is found in several different places and some of it requires updating. In particular the guidance has been written to reflect the current operating environment and it needs to address the changing way in which partnerships are evolving. There is a risk that although partnerships are currently managed well that they are not in the future. The guidance will introduce a risk assessment tool to determine the level of governance and sign off that is required for future partnerships. It will clarify the terms of reference and sign off arrangements within the council. The guidance will seek to establish how meetings are conducted and the protocols that should be place. For example, the council would wish to see residents have the opportunity to participate in partnership meetings. All statutory partnerships allow this opportunity but we would encourage other less formal ones to provide this opportunity too. The guidance will also set out further advice on the publication of meeting dates.
12. A draft of the guidance has been produced and is currently being reviewed by partners. It is obviously our intention, as much as is possible, to bring forward guidance that is supported by partners. We expect to issue new guidance on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2015.
13. **Review of administrative support to statutory partnerships.** There is insufficient resource within the council to support the administration of every partnership. Beyond the statutory partnerships that the council will support, we are considering what

capacity is available to support other significant partnerships. We will undertake this review with our partners. Thought is being given to different operational structures within the council to make best use of the resources that are available.

### Implications

14. At this point there are no specific implications to the work. It is not intended to change the level of investment made on Partnerships and their support but proposals could emerge to use that funding in a different way. For example proposals may emerge to consolidate the administrative support to boards.

### Recommendations

Audit & Governance Committee are –

- Asked to note the work currently being undertaken
- Indicate whether they wish to review the draft partnership guidance
- Note that a further report will be produced in April 2015.

Reason: To ensure that Members are kept updated on the work that is taking place in respect of governance arrangements for partnership working.

### Contact Details

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**Report  
Approved**



**Date**

2<sup>nd</sup> December  
2015

**All**



**Wards Affected:** *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

**For further information please contact the author of the report**