

Report for Resolution

Report to Scrutiny
14 January 2010

Report of Partnerships Manager

Subject Annual review: Corporate governance framework for working in partnerships

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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to inform executive about the outcomes of the annual review of the council's involvement with partnerships, including:

- New partnerships added
- Partnerships removed
- Key changes to significance scores

Executive are being asked to:

- Endorse the partnerships register

Recommendations

Executive is recommended to:

1. Agree the partnerships register as a composite list of current partnerships (appendix 1)
2. Agree the partnership scoring and list of significant partnerships (appendix 2)
3. Consider a further refresh of the register following April 2010, in relation to lead officer arrangements

Financial Consequences

None

Risk Assessment

This annual review of partnership governance arrangements requires a risk assessment to be carried out for each highly significant partnership. This supports the council's risk management strategy, specifically in relation to partnership risks.

Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities

The report helps to meet the strategic priority "Aiming for excellence – ensuring the Council is efficient in its use of resources, is effective in delivering its plans, is a good employer and communicates effectively with its customers, staff and partners" and the service plan priority to maintain a partnerships register and undertake annual review of it.

Executive Member: Councillor Waters - Corporate Resources and Governance

Ward: All

Contact Officers

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Background Documents

Corporate governance framework and toolkit for working in partnership

Report

Background

1. The *Corporate governance framework and toolkit for working in partnerships* was developed and implemented last year. It responds to the audit commission's guidance on working in partnerships which stipulates the importance of good governance. It has supported the Use of resources assessment that seeks to ensure that councils maintain a sound system of internal control in relation to partnership arrangements.
2. The framework was approved by executive in October 2008 and the initial assessment was approved by executive in April 2009. A hard copy of the *Corporate governance framework and toolkit for working in partnerships* was provided to all HoS, directors and executive members. The document and individual forms are available on the work aids section of e-grapevine. A link was sent to 'team leaders' distribution list and all elected members and a short presentation was given at the manager's briefing session. Throughout the year the partnerships team has supported officers in applying the framework to new and evolving partnerships and sought to embed the framework within the council.
3. Partnerships officer, Debbie Cronk, has undertaken the annual review of partnerships. This report highlights changes to the register as a consequence of that review.
4. The following supporting documents are included as appendices and detailed in the report:
 - Partnerships register including representation and significance score (appendix 1)
 - Partnership score card with individual highly significant scores highlighted (appendix 2)
5. The *Corporate governance framework for working in partnerships* and its annual review will be considered by executive in March 2010

Partnerships register

6. A similar process to the first year of development was followed for the annual review. With co-operation from directors and heads of service, the partnerships register (appendix 1) was analysed, and a new scorecard was completed for every partnership. The same definition of a partnership has been used this year and the same partnerships have been excluded from the register this year, as they do not meet the definition of 'partnership' for the following reasons:
 - Citycare – contract/procurement arrangement with a management board, not a decision making board
 - Steria – Private Finance Initiative
 - Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) – The LEGI board does not make decisions. It is there in an advisory capacity.

7. In addition specific task and finish groups focused on project management are excluded:
 - Norwich Independent Commission on Climate Change (NICCC) has been established as a task and finish group, (and regard will be given to any recommendation made by that group to create a partnership in the future)
 - Norwich River Gateway project delivery team is accountable to the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP). It evolved from the previous task and finish group called the Deal Ground and Utilities Sites Steering group.
8. The register now records 46 partnership arrangements and their corresponding partnership significance score. This is the same number as last year, although they are not all the same partnerships.
9. Four partnerships have been removed:
 - Independent commission for older people. The partnership ended in January 2009 when the Commission presented it's findings, conclusions and recommendations in a final report to the Council's Executive Committee. An Older Peoples' Forum which was a product of the report now meets and NCC supports it but it is not a partnership
 - Wensum Valley Trust. As part of the spending review it was agreed with the portfolio holder that as the Council receives little benefit from funding the Trust the grant would cease at 31 March 2010 and the Trust were informed in July. Only a small part of the project area falls within City boundary and was delivering limited benefits. It would be possible to pick up the current work via the Norwich Urban Fringe Project
 - Norfolk Supporting People-Provider Elected Panel.
 - Sub Regional Floating Support Monitoring Group.
10. Four new partnerships have been added. CMT and executive approval was sought for joining or forming the significant partnerships, in accordance with the governance framework. Whilst the non significant partnerships have been approved at director level:
 - Norwich and HCA Strategic Partnership. A highly significant partnership (see under key amendments to the significant partnerships list, paragraph
 - Norwich Research Park (NRP): Enterprise from Innovation Board (EIB) and NRP Development Group. The NRP Development Group was established in 2008 but EIB was established July 2009 It is led by South Norfolk district council. Its key purpose is to deliver the NRP vision. Partners include NRP Partners: BBSRC, Genome Analysis Centre, Institute of Food Research, John Innes Centre, Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital, Sainsbury Laboratory, University of East Anglia, NHS Norfolk; Local Authorities: Norfolk County Council, South Norfolk Council, Norwich City Council; Shaping Norfolk's Future; Regional Development Agency: East of England Development Agency. Norwich City Council's lead officer is Chris Popplewell, head of economic development. It is scored as a moderately significant partnership.
 - Safer Food Better Business Norfolk- a non statutory partnership led by North Norfolk district council. It was established in September 2009 with its key purpose to introduce the Food Standard Agency's 'Safer Food Better Business' pack into new and currently failing food businesses

across 5 Norfolk authorities. Norwich City Council's lead officer is Jaan Stanton, food safety officer. It is scored as a moderately significant partnership

- Healthy Options Norfolk (HONOR)- a non statutory partnership led by Norwich city council. It was established in October 2009 to promote healthier catering practices in restaurants and other caterers, healthier menu choices and better allergen and nutritional information for consumers. This is a joint project by City College Norwich, Breckland, Norwich City and Great Yarmouth Borough Councils. The lead officer is Jaan Stanton, food safety officer. It is scored as a minor partnership

Significant partnerships

11. The significance of each of the partnerships has been reviewed using the partnership score card adopted within the framework. Any partnership scoring 81% or over has been classed as a 'significant' partnership for the council.
12. Through implementing the corporate governance framework the council has identified ten 'significant' partnerships:
 - City of Norwich Partnership (CoNP)
 - Norfolk County Strategic Partnership (NCSP)
 - Greater Norwich Development Partnership (GNDP)
 - Greater Norwich Housing Partnership (GNHP)
 - Norfolk Supporting People Commissioning Body
 - Highways Agency Agreement (HAA)
 - Concessionary Bus Travel Scheme
 - NELM
 - Safer Norwich Partnership
 - Norwich and HCA Strategic Partnership

Key amendments to the significant partnerships list

13. The Norfolk Resilience Forum has been removed from the significant partnership list, as its score this year decreased taking it below the significance threshold. This was because it has now restructured and is more joined-up with one local authority representing all at the various sub and management groups, so the demand for Norwich City Council to be present is reduced.
14. A newly formed partnership has been added to the significant partnership list. The Norwich and HCA Strategic Partnership was formally established in September 2009 following the signing of the Collaboration Agreement. It brings £8M HCA investment plus access to expertise to Norwich. Membership of the Strategic Board for this year has been agreed under delegated powers by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with group leaders. Members need to be aware that the Strategic Board has powers to implement the Business Plan which forms part of the Collaboration Agreement (as approved by Executive in June/ July 2009) but that any major decisions will be referred back to the Council's Executive for approval. Risks will be managed by ensuring that rigorous project management measures in place on project delivery and creating a

collaborative working environment. Norwich City Council's lead officer is Gwyn Jones, city growth and development manager.

15. The 'significant' partnerships above have been assessed more rigorously for the strength of their governance arrangements, notwithstanding governance arrangements should be proportionate to the risks involved.

Analysis of 'non significant' partnerships

16. Appendix 1 shows that there is one partnership which has changed from being of major significance last year to 'non-significant' this year. The Norwich Alcohol Board has suspended activity for the time being following the loss of the chair and the inability to secure new leadership of the board. They will meet on an ad-hoc basis to consider the results of an existing project. It may be that in the future the significance of this board will increase again in light of the LAA review and CAA. Norwich City Council may then wish to review its role within this group. In the meantime the City centre partnership manager will be drawing together a joint approach to alcohol/night time economy issues across the council.
17. Appendix 2 shows all the partnership scores broken down in relation to the criteria on the score card. It is important to analyse scores of the 'non significant' partnerships, in order to flag any individual lines that score highly and may require further focus. In particular, this supports the chief finance officer to review the financial performance of those partnerships which are financially significant but not classified as "significant" overall. These include CNC Building Control Partnership, Greater Norwich Home Options Partnership Board, and Neighbourhood Renewal Fund Board
18. Despite this there are no non significant partnerships that score a five on the risk element of the scorecard: "Does the partnership contribute to the management of risks identified on corporate or departmental risk registers?"
19. Similarly the following non significant partnerships score a five in relation to the purpose of the partnership: "Is the Council required to set up the partnership by law or in order to receive additional funding / meet a requirement of the assessment regime eg CAA or statutory guidance?"
 - Norfolk Resilience Forum
 - Safer Food Better Business Norfolk
 - Children and Young People Partnership Trust
 - County strategic group (community safety)
 - Local Safeguarding Childrens board
 - Norfolk Youth Justice Board
20. Consequently it is important to continue to have regard to the full list of partnerships and monitor the impact and risks associated highlighted by the above analysis.

Strengths of partnership working

21. The following strengths with the council's partnerships have been highlighted:

- All the council's partnerships help to achieve either one or more corporate priorities or elements of the sustainable community strategy. This shows holistically the link between partnership working and progress towards achieving the council's priorities.
- The majority of the significant partnerships have effective communication mechanisms in place, with minuted and in some cases open meetings, websites, newsletters, forums etc.
- There also appears to be effective cascading of information from council representatives on the partnerships to other officers as well as elected members within the council, resulting in joint responsibility for actions and shared understanding.
- Performance management in some form is carried out within all the significant partnerships. Self assessment is also used within several of the significant partnerships, e.g. GNHP, CoNP.
- Anecdotal evidence has shown that all lead officers for the significant partnership are committed to partnership working and recognise the value to the council.
- It will be important to review and refresh the register in April 2010 following changes within the council, to ensure lead officer information is up to date.

Areas for improvement in governance arrangements

22. Norwich City Council does not differ greatly from the national picture in terms of weaknesses in governance arrangements, particularly resulting from a lack of provision for dealing with dispute resolution and exit arrangements. The annual review findings show that little change has occurred since last year.

Dispute and conflict resolution

Good practice suggests that all governance documents should address procedures for dispute and conflict resolution, but as last year, several of the partnerships above do not have any documented dispute and conflict resolution procedures. These partnerships will be listed within the risk register and a separate action plan.

Exit strategies

Few of the significant partnerships reviewed have formal exit strategies in place; however, around half of these are either statutory or compulsory partnerships.

However, in light of local government review many of the council's partnerships might not exist as they do now.

Risk management

As part of the process last year, all ten significant partnerships undertook a risk assessment and developed a risk management plan. It is the responsibility of directors to ensure that the risk registers are kept up-to-date and report any deterioration in targets to the partnerships manager and head of finance if appropriate. These risk registers are currently under review by the partnerships team as part of the annual review and this process will be completed by 31 March 2010. Action plans for improvement will be developed and built into service plans for 2010 -12.

Conclusion

23. The process of embedding this governance framework in to the council is continuing and the annual review has demonstrated that directors and individual officers have taken ownership of this framework.
24. Throughout the year new partnership arrangements have been entered in to and when this has happened the guidance has been followed and documentation submitted to the partnerships team for inclusion on the register.
25. The annual review identified that there are four partnerships in which the council is no longer involved or they no longer exist, and we need to ensure that the guidance for exit from a partnership is followed. The six monthly review processes at directorate level should assist in monitoring officer compliance with the framework.
26. Greater emphasis on managing risk and directors' review of risk registers may also be required in future. The changes to significant scores outlined in the report evidence a need to review the scoring for every partnership on an annual basis.
27. As part of the annual review, executive will also need to approve the partnerships register
28. It will be important to undertake a review of lead officer arrangements in April 2010, following council changes.