

**REPORT BY THE SCRUTINY PANEL  
ON  
IMPROVING PARTNERSHIP WORKING**



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report sets out the findings of the Scrutiny Panel on Improving Partnership Working.

The findings of the panel are that:

- 1) the current partnership definition is not, at present, widely understood across by both officers and members
- 2) the current partnership definition is felt to be restrictive in identifying new and innovative ways of working in a landscape of public sector transformation and continuing budgetary restriction
- 3) the partnership governance arrangements need to be capable of being applied in a more flexible manner within a defined framework
- 4) the scrutinised example of partnership working at the West Links in Arbroath shows real success but this success is not widely publicised or recognised

The panel has made a number of recommendations. It is intended that an action plan, bringing these recommendations together, will be agreed with the relevant service committees and update reports on this action plan will be brought to the Scrutiny and Audit committee.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 The Scrutiny Panel**

The Scrutiny and Audit Committee agreed on 24 June 2014 to establish a Scrutiny Panel to consider Improving Partnership Working. The Panel was established by Committee Report No 284/14 to the Scrutiny and Audit Committee on 26 August 2014 and comprised the following members:-

Councillor Bill Bowles (Chair)

Councillor Bill Duff

Councillor Jeanette Gaul

Councillor Rob Murray

Councillor Bob Myles

Susan Bruce (Lead Officer)

The Panel was also assisted and guided by:-

Councillor Bob Spink (Convenor of Scrutiny and Audit Committee)

### **1.2 The Remit of the Panel**

The Panel agreed that the brief for the review was to consider the following points:-

- 1) Identify:
  - a) current partnership arrangements in place
  - b) current partnership governance arrangements
  
- 2) Assess whether these partnership arrangements:
  - a) demonstrate improved and beneficial working relationships;
  - b) fully utilise opportunities to engage with both the private and 3<sup>rd</sup> sectors effectively

The review excludes Angus Community Planning Partnership.

## **2. CARRYING OUT THE REVIEW**

The Panel carried out a range of different activities to enable it to carry out its review.

### **2.1 Documentation**

Information was provided to members of the Panel by the Lead Officer at the commencement of the review. This documentation included:-

- 1) Angus Council Partnership Governance Standards (*Appendix One*)
- 2) List of partnership information supplied by Angus Council officers
- 3) "Partnership Working – key issues around evaluation"  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/25954/0028683.pdf>
- 4) "The meaning, roles and principles of partnership working"  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/03/19044/34227>
- 5) "Partnership Working"  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47171/0025758.pdf>
- 6) "Governance and accountability in partnership working"  
<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/about/plans/sac09.asp>

## **2.2 Interviewees**

The Panel met with Siobahn Fagan and Debbie Gowans from Angus Council Communities team and Lesley Higgins and Gavin Nicol from Angus Council Leisure Services.

Members also met with the following external parties to help get a broader appreciation of the area under review:-

- 1) Jade Mitchell from the West Links Partnership
  
- 2) ACO Lewis Ramsay, Director of Prevention & Protection, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service and Ross Haggart, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service with reference to Scottish Fire & Rescue's partnership work with Glasgow Housing Association

## **2.3 Site Visits**

No site visits were required for the scope of this review.

### **3. PARTNERSHIP WORKING – CURRENT DEFINITION AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

The current partnership definition and governance arrangements are set out in the document 'Partnership Governance Standards', as included at Appendix One.

This document sets out the criteria which must be met for a working arrangement to be considered a partnership and includes a helpful decision flow diagram to assist in this process. Under the current definition, arrangements which include the following are not considered to be partnerships:

- 1) A service level agreement
- 2) Payment to deliver the service on behalf of or in conjunction with the Council
- 3) Payment for goods
- 4) Monetary support, eg, grant, loan, from the Council
- 5) Any form of rental agreement
- 6) Where the financial risk and liability lies solely with the Council

Should none of these conditions apply; the arrangement can be considered a partnership. The partnership should then be registered in the Council's partnership register, held by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, and permission sought to enter into the partnership.

The document sets out criteria which are used to categorise the partnership as low/medium or high risk (to the Council) and also the expected governance arrangements to be followed.

#### **4. PARTNERSHIP WORKING – EXISTING PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS IN ANGUS COUNCIL**

Information was sought from officer groups across Angus Council, to determine the extent of existing partnership working.

Extensive information was received, collated and compiled into the document "aggregated partnership responses 301014". This document is included at available on request.

This information included the only partnership already known to the Panel, the West Links Partnership in Arbroath.

Siobhan Fagan, Communities Officer, Arbroath and Area Communities Team responded to the questions as follows and Jutta Scharnberger, Landscape Service Manager, Communities Directorate provided the following information around the original purpose and intent of the partnership.

The partnership between Angus Council and private sector operators on the West Links was set up with a view to improving services and the amenity of the area to offer visitors and the local community a quality integrated leisure experience. To achieve this, the Council and the private sector operators/businesses needed to act together to develop the economic social and environmental potential of West Links.

In May 2011 [Report No 344/11](#) was submitted by the Director of Neighbourhood Services seeking the Council's approval for a draft partnership agreement for West Links, Arbroath and also seeking approval for the Director to enter into that partnership agreement with the private sector facility providers on West Links. The Council resolved to authorise the Director of Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the then Head of Law and Administration to enter into, on behalf of the Council, a partnership agreement with private sector facility providers who delivered services on West Links, Arbroath. It was agreed that the Local Community Planning Manager would take this forward.



The work of the partnership has been monitored and reflected in the Local Community Planning Team's KPI's and annual report, minutes of meetings and performance management framework required for the Coastal Communities Fund.

A significant amount of regeneration has taken place in the West Links area since 2011. Angus Council has invested over £500,000 in a new adventure play area and also committed land at West Links to the Arbroath Skatepark Project Club, as well as a sum of money to boost the groups fundraising efforts towards the new skatepark. In 2012 the Local Community Planning Team in partnership with the Roads Division developed a funding proposal to the Coastal Communities Fund which included enhancements to the physical environment along with the opportunity of employing a West Links Leisure Coordinator to promote the area and co-ordinate a programme of activity to attract visitors all year round. The bid was successful and the full amount of £220,000 was awarded to provide a new suite of street furniture, carry out improvements to the sea wall and develop the new slipway. The new West Links Leisure Coordinator was appointed in August 2014.

The partnership has been consulted with throughout all project stages and has taken an active role in shaping what the West Links area will look like. The group are now at a stage where they are giving consideration to further developing the area and are in agreement that it would be in the best interest of the group to become formally constituted in order to potentially attract external funding and that the current partnership agreement/constitution would be reviewed and updated. Following discussions with Angus Council's Legal Team it was agreed that the Legal Team would investigate the requirements for such a body and what the council's involvement would be. A number of draft models of what the partnership (now known as the 'West Links Parks Association') could look like have been shared with the group for their consideration.

A more robust agreement/constitution is needed if the group wish to open a bank account, apply to funders, register for charitable status, become a company, hire staff or acquire premises. It will assist the group in clarifying what the roles and responsibilities are for each member and how the group should operate. The group is currently exploring external funding options to enable them to seek independent advice regarding their future structure therefore the way in which the group is monitored in the future may change depending on what structure they choose.

Jade Mitchell, West Links Kiosk provided the Panel with her views and experience of partnership working with regard to West Links, Arbroath. She returned to Arbroath in 2009 and took over her mother's business. She initiated a meeting with Councillor Fairweather regarding her vision for West Links and this is her second year of running the facilities. She advised that her experience of the partnership at operational level has been good and in the main very positive. There have been a few issues more recently on the future of West Links which will need to be addressed.

Jillian Low, Chairperson for Arbroath Skatepark Project provided the following personal statement:

"I was heading a fundraising campaign to establish a public skatepark at West Links and felt that being part of the group would help raise awareness of our campaign, and keep the other partners up to date with our progress. I also saw it as a way to help cement good relations with the other partners, including Angus Council representatives. I hoped that the partners could work together to improve the area as a whole and ultimately attract more people to the area.

I have always been able to work well with Angus Council staff from all departments involved in the group, and felt welcomed from the start. I have worked more closely with some than others, but definitely feel I have a good working relationship and that I can speak freely about any issues or questions I may have.

My experience of this partnership has been a very positive one. The partners have successfully shared ideas and worked together well. I have enjoyed being part of something that has brought about enhancements to the area for the whole community to enjoy. I am very satisfied with the partnership and hope it continues to move forward. I feel it has created a "coming together" of all interested parties in the West Links. Allowing the partners to put forward ideas and share the decision making has resulted in positive changes to the area. It is now a very well used space by many members of the community."

During discussions with both the Council officers, external partners and scrutiny panel members, further points were raised, the main points being:

- There are currently no elected members involved in the partnership.
- Angus Council's Legal Service is currently looking at the West Links Partnership Agreement and the governance arrangements for this. Although the partnership has worked well in the past it was agreed that it is now time for review and a more robust agreement and framework is needed.
- There has been an increase in the number of visitors to West Links.
- The skatepark has brought young people back to the area which is having a positive impact on the number of people coming to the facility throughout the whole year, not only for the open season.
- Advantages for the Council of this partnership include lower running and maintenance costs and the increased promotion of tourism.
- The partnership may be able to access monies not available to the Council.
- The West Links Leisure Coordinator, Gavin Nicol, has been in post since August. His vision is to bring new people to the park and encourage them to come back. It is hoped that the partnership will develop and obtain funding so that this post can be sustained.

## **5 PARTNERSHIP WORKING – EXAMPLE PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS (EXTERNAL)**

During discussions around identifying examples of successful partnership arrangements currently undertaken by other authorities or organisations, Councillor Bowles intimated that he was aware of a successful partnership between Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) and Scottish Fire and Rescue (SFRS).

The Panel agreed that an approach should be made to GHA and/or SFRS, to identify if they would be willing to share their experience of this partnership.

The point of contact identified was ACO Lewis Ramsay, Director of Prevention & Protection, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service.

ACO Ramsay attended the Panel meeting on 10 March 2015 and gave a presentation on the work that SFRS and GHA have carried out in partnership to reduce fires and anti-social behaviours in and around GHA housing stock. ACO Ramsay gave the following overview on the work of the partnership:

In August 2010, GHA and Strathclyde Police set up a multi-disciplinary team to try and prevent anti-social behaviour. This team was expanded to include a Fire & Rescue Service Station Manager to work with Police and GHA management.

In period 2003 to 2013 there were 57 fire fatalities in GHA stock – 52% of the total fatalities in the Glasgow area.

Since the Community Improvement Partnership was set up

- There have been no fire deaths in GHA properties. FRS estimate that between 21 and 25 deaths have been prevented
- anti-social behavior has reduced
- tenancy sustainment levels have improved
- there has been a reduction in the number of people saying they do not feel safe at night
- more people say they are satisfied with the area they live in
- staff have been trained to recognise the significance of information reported by partner agencies.

## **6. CURRENT PARTNERSHIP DEFINITION AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS – THE PANEL FINDINGS**

The Panel considered not only the existing partnership definition and governance arrangements themselves, but also the understanding of these across the Council.

The Panel found that:

- a) The existing partnership definition is straightforward but perhaps too narrow in focus, given the on-going demands on budgets and the need to identify different ways of providing services
- b) The existing governance arrangements are also straightforward but further review and development would be beneficial to ensure that the governance framework in place can support all partnerships, regardless of size and/or complexity, whilst enabling flexibility
- c) As evidenced by the information received from officer groups across the Council, in response to a request for details of existing partnerships, there is a clear lack of understanding of what constitutes a partnership.
- d) It was further agreed that this lack of understanding probably extends to the member group too.
- e) The Panel felt that this lack of understanding arose from the existence of a partnership definition not being widely known.

## **7. EXISTING PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS IN ANGUS COUNCIL – THE PANEL FINDINGS**

The Panel firstly appraised the information supplied by officer groups across the Council.

This information was extensive. However, careful consideration, using the criteria set out in the partnership governance standards, showed that none, with the exception of the partnership already identified at West Links, Arbroath, could be defined as partnerships, as there were either contractual, service level, rental or financial assistance agreements in place.

Whilst this was concerning, in that it highlighted a lack of understanding of the definition of a partnership, it allowed the Panel to concentrate their efforts on the work of the West Links Partnership.

### **7.1 The West Links Partnership**

The panel then appraised the information provided for the West Links Partnership.

The panel found that, as per the original remit, the West Links partnership does show improved and beneficial working relationships and successfully utilises opportunities to engage with private and third sector partners, with scope to further increase these benefits.

The panel agreed that the West Links is a very successful partnership arrangement, which is constantly evolving and changing to adapt to changing needs and identified opportunities.

However, the panel did agree that the good work and successes at the West Links are not widely recognised or promoted, leading to a lack of recognition of both the work carried out to date and also of the potential opportunities for other private and third sector partners to engage in this type of arrangement with the council, either at the West Links or in relation to other areas or issues.

## **8. EXAMPLE PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS (EXTERNAL) – THE PANEL FINDINGS**

The panel found the example of the successful partnership working between Scottish Fire and Rescue and Glasgow Housing Association extremely interesting and agreed that it highlighted the real benefits that could be gained for all parties involved.

The panel agreed that the offer from Scottish Fire and Rescue to work in partnership with Angus Council to carry out home safety visits for vulnerable persons was also very interesting but out with the scope of this group. However, the panel agreed that the offer should be passed to Alan McKeown, Strategic Director (Communities) and John Morrow (Service Manager – Housing) for consideration.

## **9. PANEL CONCLUSIONS, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **9.1 Conclusions and summary**

The view of the panel is that

- The current partnership definition places restrictions on identifying new and innovative ways of working in a landscape of public sector transformation and continuing budgetary restriction.
- The existing partnership governance arrangements do not provide sufficient guidance or flexibility to accommodate all sizes, shapes and complexities of partnership
- The existing partnership definition and governance arrangements are not, at present, widely known or understood across both officer and member groups
- The scrutinised example of partnership working at the West Links in Arbroath shows real success but this success is not widely recognised or publicised

The panel also recognises that the beneficial change to established ways of working, both in providing or procuring services, which partnership working presents will work most effectively when integrated with supporting changes to culture and thinking across the Council.



## 9.2 Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** the existing partnership definition should be reviewed, within the constraints of statutory requirements, to determine if its focus can be expanded to allow further types of arrangements to fall within its scope

**Recommendation 2:** Review the existing partnership governance standard to ensure their continuing relevance and whether any further guidance is needed

**Recommendation 3:** the reviewed partnership definition and governance framework should be brought to the attention of officer and member groups, as well as external partners, to promote understanding of the benefits offered by partnership working. This should particularly be the case in relation to any transformational change activity across the Council.

**Recommendation 4:** Publicise and continue to promote the success of partnership working including West Links, Arbroath (and all future successes), both within the officer/ member group but also with external partners and the wider public in Angus.

Use the promotion of these successes as an opportunity to share good practice and identify future opportunities

## ACTION PLAN

<u>Rec No</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible Officer</u>	<u>Agreed Y/N</u>	<u>Comments</u>	<u>Agreed Completion Date</u>
1.	Review the existing partnership definition, within the constraints of statutory requirements, to determine if its focus can be expanded to allow further types of arrangements to fall within its scope	Janine Wilson For CGOG	Y		30th November 2015
2.	Review the existing partnership governance standard to ensure their continuing relevance and whether any further guidance is needed	Janine Wilson For CGOG	Y		30th November 2015
3.	Bring the reviewed partnership definition and governance framework to the attention of both officer and member groups, to promote understanding of the benefits offered by partnership working, particularly in relation to any transformational change activity across the Council.	Janine Wilson For CGOG	Y		30th December 2015
4.	Publicise and continue to promote the success of partnership working including West Links, Arbroath (and all future successes), both within the officer/ member group but also with external partners and the wider public in Angus.  Use the promotion of these successes as an opportunity to share good practice and identify future opportunities.	Moira Naulty	Y		31 August 2015

### **PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE STANDARDS**

It is essential that the council ensures that good governance arrangements apply to any 'partnership arrangements' which are entered into as the quality of governance arrangements is a pre determinant of the success of the partnership.

For the purpose of this document a partnership is defined as 'an agreement between the council and one or more other bodies to work effectively together to achieve a common objective(s)'.

However that definition in itself covers many different arrangements with the term 'partnership' being commonly used to describe various different types of relationships which we have with other bodies.

The aim of this document is to question the type of relationship which exists with 'the other body' and through a process of elimination arrive at the type of partnership to which the guidance within this document is aimed at. (Appendix 1 refers).

Having established that the guidance applies to a particular partnership the next stage is to then assess the scale of that partnership (Appendix 2 refers). The outcome from this will then determine the type of governance arrangements which the council expects to apply to that particular partnership (Appendix 3 refers).

It should be noted that in regard to those partnerships to which this guidance applies:

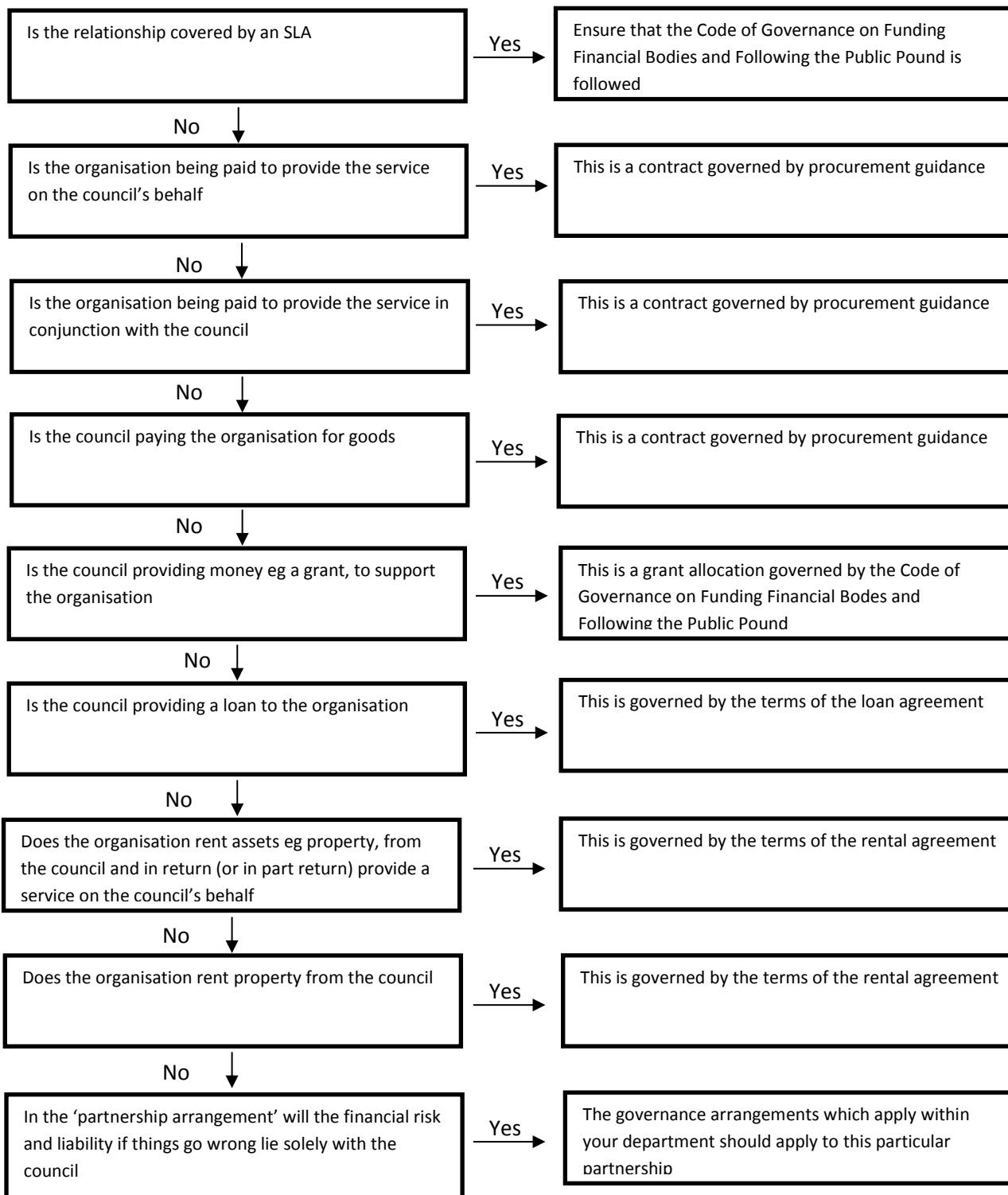
- The partnership must be registered in the council's partnership register which is held by Head of Law and Administration
- If it is a new partnership formal approval to enter into the partnership is given (Appendix 4 refers)
- As part of the annual departmental governance self assessment an assessment will require to be undertaken to determine whether the governance arrangements remain appropriate and indeed whether the partnership remains effective

Should you wish any clarification on the terms of this document please contact Head of Law and Administration.

If the answer to all of the questions is 'No' then the 'partnership arrangement' falls under the purview of this document and the guidance in the rest of the document applies.

If the answer to any of the questions is 'Yes' the 'partnership arrangement' does not fall under the purview of this document and the box on the right gives guidance on what should determine the governance arrangements of the relationship.

The questions are in no particular order.



Not all partnerships are of the same scale, or carry the same degree of risk. A level of pragmatism has to be built into any arrangements so that smaller partnerships are not strangled by an inappropriate level of governance. To achieve this, the following grading system has been developed. It is a simple mechanism to gauge in rough terms the scale of the partnership. The governance required for the partnership will be determined by the scale of the partnership.

<b>Score</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Low to Medium</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Score (1 or 2)</b>
<b>Estimated cost to or financial input by the council</b>	<£150,000	>£150,000	
<b>Proportion of funding the council is providing to the partnership</b>	0 – 65%	66 – 100%	
<b>Council staff required to support the partnership</b>	Equivalent of up to 5 FTE	Equivalent of greater than 5 FTEs	
<b>Estimated length of partnership</b>	Up to 5 years	Over 5 years	
<b>Partner involvement</b>	Partners fully / partially engaged	Partners not fully engaged	
<b>Have we done this before and are therefore confident we can deliver the expected outcomes?</b>	Yes	No	
<b>Strategic importance</b>	Will affect delivery of none, 1 or 2 of the council's strategic objectives	Will affect delivery of 3 or more of the council's strategic objectives	

<b>Partnership outcomes</b>	Outcomes partially / clearly defined and measurable	Outcomes haven't yet been defined	
<b>Does the partnership fulfil a statutory obligation</b>	No	Yes	

Score the partnership 1 or 2, against each criterion. Once you have the total score for your partnership it can be graded into one of two categories, High or Low to Medium.

<b>Score</b>	<b>Partnership Category</b>
<b>09 – 13</b>	<b>Low to Medium level</b>
<b>14 – 18</b>	<b>High level</b>

## Governance Requirements

The level of governance that must be applied to a partnership depends on its scale, ie how it has been assessed. The type of governance requirements for each category of partnership is set out below.

<b>Governance Requirements</b>	<b>Low to Medium Level Partnership</b>	<b>High Level Partnership</b>
<b>Clearly defined vision, objectives &amp; benefits</b>	✓	✓
<b>Organisational arrangements</b>	✓	✓
<b>Risk Register</b>	X	✓
<b>Financial Management</b>	✓	✓
<b>Performance Management</b>	X	✓
<b>Exit Arrangements</b>	✓	✓
<b>Public Engagement</b>	X	✓
<b>Accountability and Transparency</b>	✓	✓

The above are considered to be minimum requirements however it is intended that the application of this should be flexible with deviation allowed where there is appropriate justification. In addition the scale of application of each of the requirements will vary according to the partnership and its particular issues.

The above relate to governance requirements of the 'partnership'. In addition members of the partnership would be expected to comply with the behaviour standards within their own organisation, as outlined within a code of conduct or equivalent.