



Committee Report

Committee	CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date	6 JUNE 2023
Topic	PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS
Report of	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND CABINET MEMBER FOR STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT

SUMMARY / BACKGROUND

1. At the Corporate Scrutiny Committee meeting in May 2022, a scoping document was approved by the committee for an item on partnership arrangements to be added to the workplan. This report provides committee members with the information requested against the key lines of enquiry identified.

FOCUS FOR SCRUTINY

2. **Is there a formal framework for entering partnership arrangements so that its purpose and expected outcomes are fully understood and that the council's agreed priorities and objectives are met?**

2.1 The council has a partnership framework (see Appendix 1) to provide all the relevant information that must be considered before entering a partnership arrangement and the minimum governance arrangements to be put in place for its oversight. This was refreshed in March 2023. The framework remains in draft pending corporate scrutiny committee consideration of this topic and identification of any recommendations following its review.

2.2 Perhaps the most critical element of that framework is the need to clarify what is meant by a genuine partnership as distinct from a commissioned service for which there are specific contractual obligations (such as our strategic partnerships with Hampshire County Council and Portsmouth City Council) which are subject to different formal review mechanisms as a contract for service. The usage of the word partnership can be confusing as it is often used to describe a variety of working and commercial relationships. For the purposes of the Isle of Wight Council, a partnership is defined as an arrangement involving the council and one or more other organisations, from any sector, who share the responsibility for agreeing and then delivering a set of actions and outcomes that improve the economic and/or social environmental well-being of people living on, working on, or visiting the Isle of Wight.

- 2.3 The framework also sets out the wider considerations to be taken account of by the nominated officer who will be responsible for the partnership arrangements, before entering into an agreement. Such consideration include any risks associated with the partnership and how they will be managed, compliance with the council's performance management arrangements, effective delivery planning, statutory obligations under equalities legislation, the level of auditing and scrutiny required and most importantly, what resources are needed to deliver the intended outcomes and expectations of the partnership and whether they are available. The council must not enter any partnership where it cannot fully and effectively contribute to its success and there are clear links to the delivery of its corporate priorities.
- 2.4 There is a partnership register (see Appendix 2) that has been established for the purposes of holding a central record of all partnerships. This provides details against each of the key lines of enquiry that scrutiny presented for this report and will be refreshed on an annual basis going forward. It is still work in progress and is yet to be fully populated and evaluated for areas that require improvement, although work is ongoing to make sure that it is up to date and remains up to date. Unfortunately, due to the reductions in staffing over the period of austerity, there is no longer dedicated resource for the corporate oversight of such matters and the register that existed had become out of date. The register will now be maintained by the organisational intelligence team.

3. How is performance, value for money, outputs and financial incentives measured?

- 3.1 Partnerships will vary in size and complexity and significance. The partnership framework sets out the minimum requirements that must be present when putting any such arrangements in place, including setting out the partnership's purpose, objectives, and outcomes to be delivered, its performance management arrangements, accountabilities of those organisations involved and arrangements for the review and termination of the partnership as may be required.
- 3.2 The partnership framework document sets out the requirement going forward for a partnership registration form to be completed by the council's nominated lead officer for that partnership. This requests all the relevant information required by the partnership framework to be put in place before entering into any such arrangement and therefore provides a formal record of its existence and evidence of its relevance, connection to corporate priorities, outcomes and outputs to be achieved, how it will be managed and reviewed and can demonstrate added value to the Island's communities.
- 3.3 The partnership register shown at Appendix 2, provides details of the arrangements for performance management and oversight of the intended partnership outcomes.

4. Is provision made for the scrutiny of partnerships?

- 4.1 This will be dependent upon the type of partnership. Some partnerships will require more formal governance arrangements to be put in place, both in the establishment of the partnership itself and in the discharge of their activities, especially if they are to exercise executive and/or non-executive functions of the council. These will be open to the corporate scrutiny committee to consider for review at any time. There are also more formal relationships for scrutiny in the review of partnerships for specific areas such as community safety where there is a legislative requirement for the designation of a committee where local community safety partners can be requested to attend meetings and provide information on the discharge of their work. Scrutiny committees also have a formal role regarding flood risk management which allows for review and scrutiny of the Isle of Wight local flood risk management strategy and the work of the partnership to deliver it. Corporate Scrutiny received reports on both items at their meeting in May 2023.
- 4.2 The partnership register shown at Appendix 2, provides details of the arrangements for the review of each partnership and its relationship to formal scrutiny where necessary.
- 4.3 The principal power of a scrutiny committee is to influence the policies and decisions made by the council and other organisations involved in delivering public services and so can investigate any issue which affects the local area. It remains that the purpose of scrutiny is to improve the lives of local people through improved public services. Ultimately, scrutiny may choose to scrutinise any area of activity set out in the partnership register if there is an item of concern to our local area identified by scrutiny committee members.

5. Are all partner organisations expected to provide information to the council to enable members to conduct a full review if required?

- 5.1 This will be dependent upon the type of information requested and the purpose for which the information is to be used. Any requests for information need to be undertaken within the confines of data protection legislation. Some partnership arrangements may necessitate a formal data sharing agreement to be put in place to fulfil the objectives and intended outcomes of the partnership arrangement. There is a formal process to be followed in the development of any such agreements involving the council's corporate information unit.
- 5.2 In general, the requirements of each partner organisation when entering a partnership arrangement are set out so that effective performance monitoring can take place by the partnership lead and supporting board. The partnership framework document sets out these expectations as part of the key considerations that must be identified before entering into an agreement.

6. Are expected outcomes being delivered?

- 6.1 The partnership framework document sets out the expectation that a partnership must be regularly reviewed to check for its ongoing viability and validity in delivering its intended outcomes and outputs. Depending upon the type and nature of the partnership, the responsibility for leading a review, identifying corrective action or determining the council's continued involvement in the partnership rests with the council's nominated lead officer for that partnership. However, some partnerships have a more formal footing or even legislative requirement for them to be in place and as such require a more structured approach to any such review taking place.
- 6.2 The partnership register shown at Appendix 2, provides a high-level determination of whether the partnership is meeting its expected outcomes. This acts as a marker for consideration as to whether there is a need for more investigation to be undertaken.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

Appendix 1: Partnership Framework
Appendix 2: Register of Partnerships

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