

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ON 13 FEBRUARY 2020

PART A : REPORT

SUBJECT: Update on Progress against the Recommendations from the Partnerships Audit

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DATE: 13 January 2020

EXTN: 37580

PORTFOLIO AREA: Policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This paper sets out progress to date on a register of partnerships for Arun District Council, including an initial list of arrangements which may meet the agreed definition of a partnership and how this work should go forward.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To note the background and proposed approach to developing an up-to-date partnership register

1. BACKGROUND:

- 1.1. Partnership working has been identified as increasingly important for the future, particularly given the predicted financial situation for local government.
- 1.2. An extract from the CIPFA document 'Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (part 3, section 12)' states:
"The audit committee's role should be to consider the assurance available on whether the partnership or collaboration arrangements are satisfactorily established and operating effectively. The Committee should satisfy itself that the principles of good governance underpin the partnership arrangements. For example, the audit committee should seek assurance that the authority has appropriate arrangements to identify and manage risks, ensure good governance and obtain assurance on compliance. The committee may also want to know what arrangements have been put in place to maintain accountability to stakeholders and ensure transparency of decision making and standards of probity are maintained."
- 1.3. The Corporate Management Team agreed a working definition of 'partnerships' in order to facilitate the development of a Partnerships Register and ongoing process for reviewing this.

“A voluntary or statutory arrangement between the authority and one or more free and independent parties which is designed to secure some shared objective. The authority is required to make either a significant financial contribution or a significant contribution in terms of other assets or it will take the role of lead or accountable body within the arrangement

A partnership is not about a traditional customer/supplier relationship, outsourcing or other purely contractual relationship”

1.4. A recent survey of Group Heads has resulted in a much longer list of ‘partners’ than has been previously identified, set out in Appendix 1. The word ‘Partnership’ is potentially used differently in a number of different contexts, which we need to take account of.

The initial list of partners (Appendix A) covers a number of differently defined bodies:

- Listed on the Arun Website under partnership working, but also wellbeing and Arun Business Partnership pages;
- Listed in the Constitution;
- Identified by Full Council as outside bodies which require a member representative from Arun;
- Arrangements identified by Group Heads, including some contracts.

1.5. CMT and the Audit and Governance Committee have agreed that the current definition is as precise as possible, though will be open to interpretation in certain cases. A first look at the list does raise questions and the next piece of work will be to determine if all of these meet the definition.

1.6. Many of these partnerships are relatively operational in nature and it does not seem appropriate to list these, for example in the Constitution, so it will be necessary to hold a full register elsewhere.

1.7. Once the list is completed, it should be reviewed on a regular basis (bi-annually) by officers. It should also be reviewed for relevance as arrangements do sometimes outlast their usefulness or need to change. Part of this regular review should focus on outcomes, added value and our contribution in terms of finance and other resource.

1.8. Once the Register has been completed (recognising that it will be subject to change from time to time), Members of Audit and Governance need to determine how they wish to use the register to carry out their responsibilities. This may be, for example by focusing on a much smaller priority list of arrangements depending on their impact and current council priorities. A number of key relationships/partnerships with the Council are covered by significant contractual arrangements and although they will be listed in the Register they are already audited/scrutinised in other ways and this should also be noted in the Register.

1.9. We refer to partnership working on our website, <https://www.arun.gov.uk/partnership-working> but this list is not identical to that included in the Constitution. We also have separate references to partnership on our Wellbeing pages and the Arun Business Partnership pages, demonstrating some of the lack of clarity around the definition. We need to review references to

partnership on the website with Group Heads.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

2.1. A Register of partnerships to be completed, including work to be undertaken by Directors and Group Heads to identify the following:

- Does a partnership have formal governance arrangements covering all participants? This will vary and may be for example a letter of agreement, a contract, or even minutes of a meeting where this was agreed.
- Does membership of the partnership contribute to the Council's objectives?
- Are partnership costs/inputs from ADC understood and controlled (financial support, time etc) and is the participation cost-effective?
- Is the partnership operating effectively – is it monitored to ensure that objectives/terms of reference etc are being met, does the partnership deliver synergy, has it continued beyond its usefulness etc?
- Are risks (to the Council, other members of the community etc.), identified, assessed and managed?
- Are formal reports on the partnership provided to Officers, Members and the public as appropriate, where this is considered to be necessary?

2.2. It is proposed that a report is brought back to the Audit and Governance Committee in the Autumn.

2.3. It is proposed that regular reviews/updates of the partnership register are undertaken at intervals to be agreed once the work set out above is completed.

2.4. The views of and suggestions from members are welcomed.

3. OPTIONS:

To note the proposed approach to up-dating the partnerships register

4. CONSULTATION:

See note in implications

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		✓
Relevant District Ward Councillors		✓
Other groups/persons (please specify)		✓
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	YES	NO
Financial		✓
Legal		✓

Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		✓
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		✓
Sustainability		✓
Asset Management/Property/Land		✓
Technology		✓
Other (please explain)		✓

6. IMPLICATIONS:

There are no implications for the actual review, the review may however lead to considering the nature of our future relationship with some partners which could well have implications for a number of Council policies.

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:

To produce an up to date register of partners

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Arun website partnership page:-

<https://www.arun.gov.uk/partnership-working>

CIPFA Guidance to Audit Committees on Partnerships (see extract attached)



Appendix - CIPFA
Guidance Extract.pdf