

**15 December 2015**

**Policy, Finance and Resources Committee**

**Partnership Policy and Procedures 2015**

**Report of:** *Kim Anderson, Partnership, Leisure and Funding Manager.*

**Wards Affected:** *All wards.*

**This report is:** *Public report.*

**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Council needs to ensure that any partnerships that it is involved in are both efficient, effective and that they can deliver value for money for our residents. A large amount of public money is invested in partnerships and therefore partnerships should be action and outcome focussed, whilst encouraging innovative solutions for change. Partnerships should also be monitored regularly to ensure any underperforming partnerships are highlighted and any appropriate action is taken
- 1.2 The outcome of an internal audit report dated 31 March 2015 indicated limited design and effectiveness of the Council's current partnership working and provided four recommendations for improvement. As a result of the audit recommendations the revised Partnership Policy and Procedures will ensure that there is a framework of procedures for staff to follow who are engaged in, giving consideration to engagement in, or withdrawing from partnership activities. This will provide a consistent approach when the Council enters into a partnership agreement to ensure that the partnership will not only support the Council's priorities, but strengthen the accountability amongst partners, minimise the risk to the Council and rationalise the Council's partnership working arrangements.

**2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 That Members agree to the revised Partnership Policy and Procedures as appended to this report.**

**3. Introduction and Background**

- 3.1 The Council underwent an internal audit of its partnership working arrangements in March 2015 which set out a number of recommendations. As a result of that audit and its recommendations the

report before Members sets out the revised Partnership Policy and Procedures which will ensure that any partnerships working that the Council is involved in is efficient, delivers value for money for our residents and supports the Council's priorities.

- 3.2 The Partnership Policy and Procedures include a number of separate documents that will enable officers to have a standardised approach when involved in partnership working. This will include the following:
- A definition of a 'partnership'
  - A partnership checklist, which provides questions that need to be asked before entering into any partnership agreement
  - A Terms of Reference/Agreement template in order that officers have a standardised template to follow which will set out the aims, objectives and expected outcomes of the partnership
  - A self assessment tool so that officers can evaluate and review the effectiveness of any existing partnerships
- 3.3 These documents will be available to staff through a dedicated partnership microsite.
- 3.4 The Council's partnership arrangements will be published on the Council's Partnership Register. The Partnership Register will also be linked to the Council's Corporate Risk Register, which will identify any underperforming partnerships. The register will detail each of the partners involved in the partnerships and how each partnership supports the Council's priorities.
- 3.5 It is proposed to have a rolling programme of reporting the Council's partnership working to the Council's Audit, Scrutiny and Transformation Committee.
- 3.6 It is important for officers to estimate the cost to the Council of partnership working, measured in officer time and financial commitment, in order to ensure that the benefits it receives from the partnership are sufficient to justify and formalise new partnership arrangements.

#### **4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 4.1 When setting up a new partnership arrangement officers need to be confident that the partnership will contribute to the Council's priorities and objectives and whether it will deliver best value for money for Brentwood residents.
- 4.2 In principle Brentwood Borough Council will actively seek to work in partnership and make positive contributions where:
- It has statutory obligations to be a member of the partnership;

- It is considered that partnership working will provide a more efficient or effective way of achieving its aims and objectives, than by simply working alone
  - Partnership working will potentially increase opportunities for accessing or saving money or resources in line with the above, thus ensuring best value delivery for the residents of Brentwood.
- 4.3 Whilst the benefits of working in partnership are overwhelmingly positive, there are also risks which must be fully considered and mitigated against.
- 4.4 Officers need to question whether the Council needs to be involved in the proposed partnership in the first place or whether another working arrangement could deliver a similar objective and outcome.
- 4.5 This Partnership Policy and Procedure seeks to ensure that Brentwood Borough Council are able to recognise the full range of partnerships we are engaged with, and be satisfied that they are:-
- Properly risk assessed and suitably managed;
  - Formally approved and registered on the Council's Partnership Register;
  - Monitored and reviewed on at least an annual basis in order that a focus on delivery can be maintained;
  - Have clear aims, objectives and outcomes;
  - Have a clear terms of reference;
  - Where appropriate, operate an information sharing protocol which partners have responsibility to adhere to;
  - Have clear governance in place to ensure accountability;
  - Establish a clear understanding between partners regarding their individual and collective responsibility and liability for the actions of the partnership;
  - Operating effectively in adding value to our efforts to achieve our priorities and as appropriate supporting the delivery of partnership priorities, or discharging our statutory responsibilities;
  - Providing Brentwood Borough Council, our partners and the public good value for money in relation to the level of investment being made;
  - Establish clear processes and procedures in place for the dissolving of partnership arrangements;
  - Delivering positive outcomes for the people of Brentwood.
- 4.6 The new Partnership Policy and Procedures should ensure that there is accountability within the partnership amongst the various partners and also that the partnership itself is accountable to another body for audit and

scrutiny purposes to ensure that it is still delivering on the partnership objectives and outcomes.

## **5. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 5.1 The Internal Audit review of our partnership working recommends strengthening our partnership arrangements. The revised Partnership Policy and Procedures will ensure that the Council is only involved in partnership working which supports one or more of the Council's priorities to deliver the outcomes that will support Brentwood Borough residents.

## **6. References to Corporate Plan**

- 6.1 Good partnership working will enhance and support the Council's priorities and objectives and deliver effective and efficient ways of working that will deliver value for money for Brentwood residents.

## **7. Implications**

### **Financial Implications**

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All partnership working will involve some resource from Brentwood Borough Council whether this is officer time, financial commitment or other in kind support. The Partnership Policy and Procedures should ensure that a consistent, transparent approach is in place when setting up, reviewing and monitoring partnership arrangements, which in turn should minimise any financial or reputational risk to the Council.

### **Legal Implications**

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A robust governance framework in place will ensure that the Council will only enter into partnership arrangements that will assist in the delivery of expected outcomes which support the Council's priorities.

It will also ensure that clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are identified prior to entering a partnership arrangement and that a regular review of partnership working is undertaken to ensure that the partnership is still delivering outcomes against Council priorities and that the partnership is still fit for purpose.

### Risk management

By utilising the standardised checklist for entering into any new partnership, the Council will properly risk assess, manage and minimise the risk to the Council.

## **8. Background Documents:**

- Internal Audit review of partnership working
- Definition of a partnership?
- Partnership checklist
- Terms of Reference/Agreement template
- Self Assessment Tool

## **9. Appendices to this report**

Appendix A - Partnership Policy and Procedures

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