

**DRAFT**

**Chesterfield Borough Council**

**Partnership Protocol**

**2019 - 2023**

## **1.0 Context**

Partnership working is an increasingly important way in which Local Government can deliver more efficient and effective services to local residents. Chesterfield Borough Council is a member of a number of partnerships with organisations across the county and region, and in some cases responsible for establishing and leading these partnerships.

This protocol establishes minimum standards of governance and management to be followed by partnerships in order to satisfy the Council that the partnerships are being well run and are delivering benefit to the authority. The protocol will outline key requirements in initiating, approving, setting up, operating, reviewing and exiting partnership arrangements.

## **2.0 What is a partnership?**

The word partnership is used with increasing frequency across all sectors. It can mean different things to different groups. A partnership can be described as a group of stakeholders brought together from a range of organisations, to be responsible for tackling challenges, and exploiting opportunities in which they have a shared interest. A partnership can also be described as a joint working arrangement where partners:

- Are otherwise independent bodies
- Agree to co-operate to achieve common goals or outcomes
- Create a new organisational structure or process to achieve these outcomes
- Plan and implement a jointly agreed programme, often with joint staff or resources
- Share relevant information, and pool risks and rewards

For the purposes of this protocol, a partnership is defined as: An arrangement involving the Council and one or more other organisations from any sector, who share responsibility for agreeing and then delivering a set of actions and outcomes that contribute to the delivery of the Council Plan and/or service priorities.

## **3.0 Features of a partnership**

Partnerships vary widely in the exact form they take, but they usually share a number of basic features:

- A common purpose of the member organisations

- Defined roles and relationships of those involved
- A range of organisations working together
- A lead agency
- A good understanding of the work of other bodies in the partnership
- A constitution or clear terms of reference
- Be resourced in some way
- Have a commitment to share information needed to review value for money and performance
- A protocol or arrangement for dispute resolution

Chesterfield Borough Council would not define a partnership as:

- An arrangement made by the Council with a third party to deliver one or more services on its behalf. This is a contract for services. The Council is defined as the procurer/commissioner of the service and the third party as the contracted provider of that service. *For example a golf course run by an external management company*
- Networks, forums or groups of elected Councillors and/or officers from local authorities and others who come together to discuss forthcoming issues, policy and strategy. *For example a local authority benchmarking group which formulates better practice to improve service delivery*
- External bodies that are single organisations but in which councils may be invited to take part. An example is nominations to governing bodies

## **4.0 Governance and management processes**

Where a partnership involves a resource commitment e.g. direct funding, direct staffing contribution or an in kind contribution (but opportunity cost) for example free accommodation, the Council's Finance and Performance Board must be consulted before any agreement is made. This includes a change to an existing partnership arrangements or a new arrangement.

In the case of larger partnerships and joint working arrangements with significant finance, staffing and in kind contributions the decision may need to be taken by Cabinet or Joint Cabinet and Employment and General Committee in accordance with the Council's constitution. This follows on from discussions at Finance and Performance Board.

For all partnerships the Director of Finance and Resources in conjunction with the monitoring officer must have reassurance that the partnership will promote and

maintain the same high standards of conduct and governance that apply throughout the Council. They should also ensure that the accounting arrangements are satisfactory and that the overall governance arrangements, legal issues and risks have been fully appraised before agreements are entered into with external bodies.

The Senior Leadership Team and Corporate Management Team are responsible for ensuring that all appropriate approvals are obtained before any negotiations are concluded in relation to work with external bodies.

Finance and Performance Board will need to be satisfied that the Council can contribute effectively to the partnership, understand and agree the resource implications and have clarity that the partnership objectives are in line with Council priorities.

The checklist at Appendix 1 should be completed for all new and changed partnerships to enable Finance and Performance Board to consider the request.

## **5.0 Once a partnership is in place**

The Council will maintain a register of all partnerships (meeting the definition in this protocol) it is involved in. This will contain details of the Council's representatives in the partnerships, the Council's contribution, name and contacts for the lead organisation and other partners. This information will be maintained by the Policy and Communications Service and presented to Finance and Performance Board on an annual basis.

Lead officers will also be asked to provide a one page briefing on the partnership including its outputs and outcomes. Finance and Performance Board may request further information including delivery plans, performance management information and risk registers for a particular partnership so that they can evaluate the costs versus the benefits and ensure expected outputs and outcomes are being met.

This process will provide a viability and validity process for continuing with any partnership. If the Council chooses to withdraw or end a partnership arrangements an exit/succession strategy will need to be developed by the lead officer in consultation with other partners.