

Annual Report of Partnerships – 2014/2015

The council is required to provide an annual assurance on its partnership activities, which forms part of the Annual Governance Statement.

The definition of a partnership in accordance with the publication Working in Partnership is:

“ A process in which two or more organisations or groups work together to achieve a common goal, and do so in such a way that they achieve more effective outcomes than by working separately ”.

The Partnership Officer reported to Corporate Governance & Audit Committee in September 2013 that there were 10 strategic partnerships. Following the recent audit undertaken I can confirm that this is still the case. The original register of partnerships had been reduced significantly over the years, this has been due to the ending, merging or re-classification of partnerships.

Chichester District Council's partnership guidance sets out what constitutes a partnership:

- Strategic Partnership
- Strategic Service Delivery Partnership
- Community Partnership
- Task and Finish/Project Groups

The following is a list of what is considered not to be a partnership.

- Shared Service
- Joint Commissioning
- Grants
- Contracts
- Networks
- Subscription Service
- Social Enterprise
- Community Development Trusts
- Trust Boards
- Limited Companies

In November 2012 Partnership Guidance was published, this document replaced the previous Partnership Toolkit. The guidance sets out what the council considers to be partnership working. Mentioned in this document were the responsibilities for members and officers involved in partnership working, in order to ensure that appropriate governance arrangements are in place when creating a partnership.

Internal Audit reviewed a sample of Partnerships to see whether the appropriate governance arrangements were in place. There still appears to be difficulty with some services identifying what is a partnership, although this is clearly defined in the Partnership Guidance.

The guidance states that all partnerships that the council is involved in must have the following in place:

- Terms of Reference
- Action Plan with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time Bound) outcomes, outcome measures and planned timescales.
- Risk Assessment
- Exit Strategy
- Lines of Accountability
- Regular Reviews
- Set financial arrangements
- Partnership register, to contact the Policy Officer when setting up a new partnership or reviewing an existing one in order for the partnership register to be kept up to date.

In some cases information taken from the Services Service Plans relating to Partnerships had been incorrectly classified as a Partnership.

Whilst assurance can be provided on the partnerships which have met the Partnership Guidance, it is recommended that staff are reminded of the need to refer to the guidance when forming or reviewing a Partnership. This will be strengthened further when the Partnership Officer reviews the Partnership Guidance during the year.

From discussions with the Partnership Officer some of the partnerships disclosed need to be investigated to ascertain whether they are in fact a partnership in accordance with the definition.