



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Governance and Audit Committee

20 April 2022

Report of: Councillor Adam Stokes

Deputy Leader of the Council



Partnership Governance Policy

This Partnership Governance Policy aims to ensure that South Kesteven District Council maintains a structured approach to entering into new partnerships and ensuring appropriate governance of existing partnerships.

Report Author

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Corporate Priority:	Decision type:	Wards:
Well Performing Council	Administrative	All Wards

Reviewed by:	Alison HallWright, Assistant Director of Finance	6 April 2022
Approved by:	Alan Robinson, Deputy Chief Executive	6 April 2022
Signed off by:	Councillor Adam Stokes, Deputy Leader of the Council	7 April 2022

Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s)

- 1. Governance and Audit Committee is asked to approve the Partnership Governance Policy.**

1 The Background to the Report

1.1 This Partnership Governance Policy aims to ensure that South Kesteven District Council maintains a structured approach to entering into new partnerships and ensuring appropriate governance of existing partnerships. The policy is specifically designed to provide guidance and to ensure consistency.

The Policy will cover:

- What partnership working is
- How to enter into and set up a new partnership
- How to maintain governance and monitoring arrangements for existing partnership
- How to exit from a partnership

1.2 The Council is required to have a clear and committed approach to partnership working in order to ensure that:

- The Council, its partners and communities achieve best value in the provision of services
- The Council can encourage innovative working and positive outcomes
- Community leadership and engagement is promoted effectively
- The aims and objectives of each partnership contribute to achieving shared goals
- Partnership risks are being managed effectively
- Suitable continuity arrangements are put in place where the loss of a partnership could adversely affect the ability to deliver critical services and so that
- The Council can meet the statutory responsibilities where partnerships involve the delivery of statutory services which are the responsibility of South Kesteven District Council.

1.3 This Governance Policy which is applicable to any officer involved in partnership working has been created to ensure the Council's formal partnership arrangements:

- Promote at least one of the corporate priorities and reflect these in its core values
- Provide mutual benefits for each partner in proportion to the contribution
- Provide demonstrable benefits to residents, partners and communities
- Satisfy its obligations to deliver value for money and comply with requirements for governance, risk management and probity
- Provide accountability where decisions are being made about expenditure of public money

2 Definition of Partnership Working

2.1 Partnership working is where two or more organisations work together with trust, openness and honesty to deliver mutually beneficial outcomes they cannot achieve alone.

Partnership working is about building and sustaining a relationship over a long period of time. Whatever its form, partnerships involve sharing responsibility and overcoming the inflexibility created by organisational and sectoral boundaries.

Overarching Principles

Partnership working must be guided by the following principles:

Partnership Register

A corporate partnership register will be established and will have two main functions:

- To provide an overview of the partnerships that the Council has

- To provide a framework to allow robust challenge and scrutiny of the partnerships

Lead Officer

2.2 All partnerships must have a nominated lead officer from the Council who is responsible for the day to day relationship with any partner organisation. The responsibilities of the nominated officer are as follows:

- To ensure that the partnership is added to the corporate partnership register
- To ensure that the appropriate framework for governance and accountability is followed
- To report on the progress of the partnership and undertake an annual health check
- To assess and exception report on risks as appropriate
- To comply with the equality and diversity agenda as required

Managing Existing Partnerships

2.3 Partnerships must be evaluated at least annually to ensure that they remain fit for purpose, are performing as expected, continue to be a strategic fit and provide value for money. The areas to consider as part of the annual review are:

- Who the partners are
- The purpose/priorities
- Resource implications
- Communication arrangements
- Decision-making arrangements
- Equality arrangements
- Information sharing arrangements
- Performance management arrangements
- Financial management arrangements
- Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

Entering into New Partnerships

2.4 When approached to enter into a partnership where the Council is not the lead organisation, the lead officer should consider the following:

- Does the proposed partnership meet the Council's aims and objectives?
- Does it have the appropriate governance arrangements?
- What resources will be required to be put in?
- Does the withdrawal of a partner increase the financial risk?
- Will it be able to add value?

Setting Up a New Partnership (where the Council is the lead body)

2.5 Developing a firm foundation is essential to ensure that an organisation is ready to enter into a partnership. When developing a new partnership it should be clear how it can achieve the Council's goals. Important points to consider are as follows:

- How many partnerships are needed, and the type of organisations that the Council will partner with
- What each partnership needs to deliver for the Council, its partners and the residents of the District in line with community aspirations
- What resources the Council and its partners will need to achieve the aims
- The criteria to enable the Council to select partners
- How the partnership will add value to existing arrangements

Exiting Partnerships

2.6 All partnering arrangements have a life span and an important consideration in managing them is to identify when they no longer meet the needs of the partners. When it is clear that the arrangement is no longer effective the partnership (or lead members) should meet to discuss:

- The circumstances under which a partnership may be dissolved
- The legal and financial considerations
- Any outstanding work or business
- An end of partnership report if required
- Communication to stakeholders not directly involved in the partnership

Responsibilities

Lead Officer

2.7 Each partnership has a lead officer. It is the responsibility of that lead officer:

- To ensure that this policy is applied to their partnership by following the relevant guidance for new and existing partnerships and for exiting a partnership
- To carry out an annual review of their partnership governance arrangements.

Supporting Procedures

The Partnership Register will be maintained by the Democratic Services and provides a comprehensive list of all partnerships that the District Council is engaged with. The Partnership Health Check template is shown at Appendix A and is used to undertake annual reviews of each partnership and therefore underpins the principles of this policy.

3 Consultation and Feedback Received, Including Overview and Scrutiny

3.1 Governance and Audit Committee is asked to consider and approve the Partnership Policy

4 Available Options Considered

4.1 None.

5 Preferred Option

5.1 The preferred option is set out in the report.

6 Reasons for the Recommendation (s)

It is important to ensure there is robust governance in place in respect of key partnerships the Council is a member of to ensure appropriateness.

7 Next Steps – Communication and Implementation of the Decision

7.1 Should the recommendation be approved then the Policy will be implemented throughout the Council.

8 Financial Implications

8.1 Financial implications are considered throughout each specific partnership. There are no specific financial implications arising from the Policy itself.

Financial Implications reviewed by: Richard Wyles, Chief Finance Officer

9 Legal and Governance Implications

9.1 It is vital that the Council manages key partnerships well. This report will enhance the Governance framework of the Council.

Legal Implications reviewed by: Alan Robinson, Deputy Chief Executive

10 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

10.1 N/a

11 Risk and Mitigation

11.1 A specific risk register is in place for each partnership as required.

12 Community Safety Implications

12.1 N/a

13 How will the recommendations support South Kesteven District Council's declaration of a climate emergency?

13.1 N/a

14 Other Implications (where significant)

14.1 N/a

15 Background Papers

15.1 N/a

16 Appendices

16.1 Appendix A – Partnership Health Check Template

Report Timeline:	Date of Publication on Forward Plan (if required)	N/a
	Previously Considered by: Governance and Audit Committee	N/a
	Final Decision date	20 April 2022