

PARTNERSHIP SELF ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE & QUESTIONNAIRE

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Vision 100

Rochford District

Local Strategic Partnership



Introduction

Working in partnership is a key area of business for all partners in any given area. Partnership can be a productive way of achieving more efficient and effective use of scarce resources and there are significant duties placed on authorities with regard to areas of cross cutting activity. Examples include, Community Safety, Economic Development and Safeguarding. In broader terms statutory partners are encouraged to promote the social and environmental well being of their area and to coordinate their efforts through Local Strategic Partnerships whilst ensuring that any existing partnership involves the voluntary sector and the public in shaping strategy and planning action.

As the importance of partnership working has increased it is necessary that partnerships work professionally and have due consideration to issues of governance, managing performance, leadership and development.

Partnership Definition

A partnership describes a joint working agreement where the partners:

- Are otherwise independent bodies
- Agree to come together to cooperate to achieve a common goal or outcomes
- Create and develop a process to achieve that goal or outcomes, and where appropriate, create a new organisational structure to deliver that achievement
- Plan and implement a jointly agreed programme, which may involve joint staffing and/or resources
- Share relevant information
- Share risks and pool rewards, where appropriate
- May be required by statute to come together for the purposes of joint working

The purpose of this document is to highlight key pieces of available guidance and suggest a basic self assessment for partnership working in Rochford, based on this guidance and completed under the auspices of the Local Strategic Partnership. It is hoped that all relevant partnerships will adhere to a set of updated governance arrangements as well as work towards a set of principles and standards of operation highlighted by the completion of a self-assessment questionnaire. By agreeing to follow this approach the Rochford Local Strategic Partnership and its associated partnerships will annually review its governance arrangements and agree to go through an annual process of self assessment based on the principles of partnership working and standards of operation as laid out in the Audit Commissions Working better together? Managing local strategic partnerships guidance document and the Home Office Delivering Safer Communities: A Guide to Effective Partnership Working guidance document.

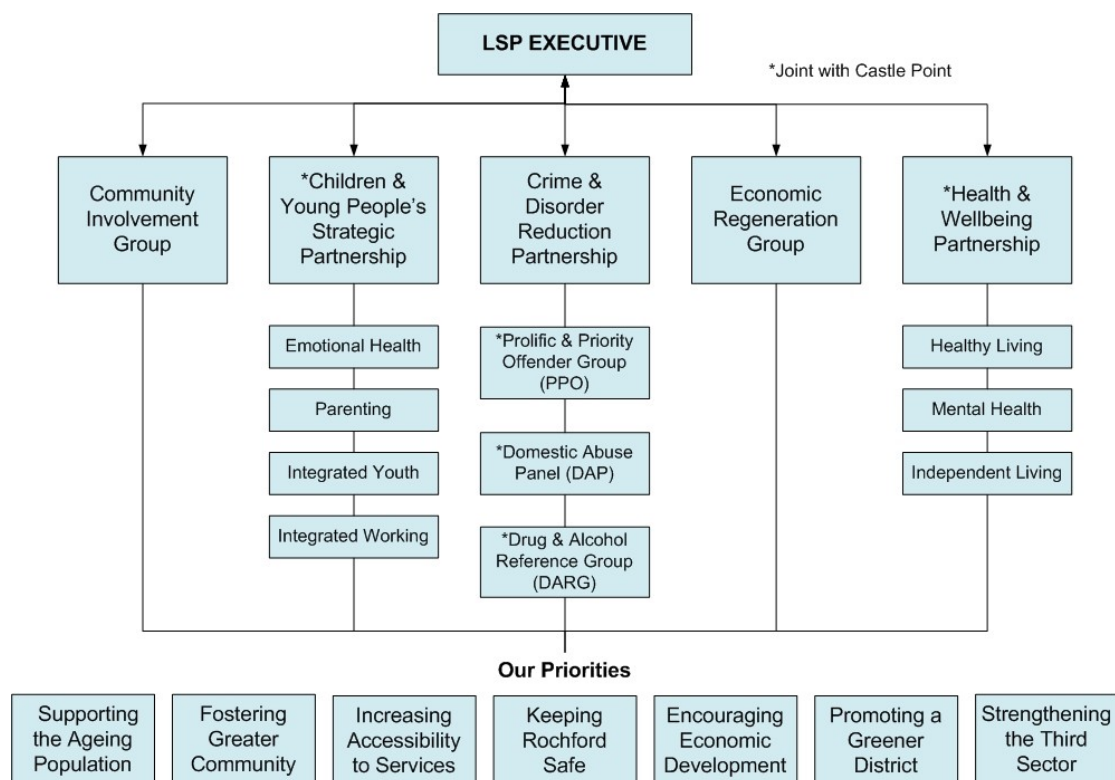
What is the Local Strategic Partnership?

Local Strategic Partnerships were recommended by government in an attempt to provide the partnership of partnerships. In essence the role of the partnership is to provide strategic overview to all aspects of partnership working in any given area and to encourage cross partnership working and to direct resources appropriately.

Rochford Local Strategic Partnership

The Rochford LSP was established in 2002 and produced its first Community Strategy in 2004. The Partnership has changed its structures over time and is made up of an Executive Board consisting of representatives of Rochford District Council, Elected Members, Essex Police, Essex County Council, NHS South East Essex, representatives of the third sector and local businesses along with representatives of the five thematic partnerships that support the delivery of the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Structure of the Rochford Local Strategic Partnership



The Sustainable Communities Strategy 2009-2021

The Rochford Sustainable Community Strategy introduces the long term vision, aspirations and objectives for the District of Rochford and its Local Strategic Partnership. The strategy was designed and developed through consultation with the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

The Sustainable Community Strategy process has provided the LSP with the knowledge and understanding of the issues that have been identified in our District as the priorities for consideration and action. These are;

- **Supporting the Ageing Population**
- **Fostering Greater Community Cohesion**
- **Strengthening the Third Sector**
- **Increasing Accessibility to Services**
- **Keeping Rochford Safe**
- **Encouraging Economic Development**
- **Promoting a Greener District**

The Comprehensive Area Assessment

The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will assess how effectively local partnerships are working together to deliver local people's priorities. These joint assessments will be made publicly available every year starting in November 2009, and will provide an annual snapshot of quality of life in the area.

The new CAA framework is specifically interested in partnership and joint working across any given area. The inspection process will focus on the delivery of outcomes, the framework states;

'...the current focus of inspectorates in assessing individual services and organisations is no longer sufficient. The power of CAA to support improving outcomes in an area will come from the added value of joining up the assessment of local services. CAA will focus on outcomes and how well local public bodies work with each other, the private and third sectors, other organisations working locally, including town and parish councils, and their local communities. It will be forward looking and assess the prospects for future improvement.' (Comprehensive Area Assessment: A guide to the new framework: Audit Commission)

Key Guidance

In 2009 The Audit Commission published 'Working better together?: Managing local strategic partnerships'. This document provides a detailed guide for Local Strategic Partnerships covering a range of issues and challenges faced by Local Strategic Partnerships. It states;

'LSPs are voluntary, unincorporated associations, but they must recognise their strategic, executive and operational roles and organise themselves appropriately. LSP success depends on the cooperation of partners with different resources and responsibilities. LSPs do not control local public service resources; they have to influence partners' mainstream spending and activity. LSPs need to develop strong partnership goals (and)...in multi tear

areas (they) face greater challenges (to achieve shared goals) than those in single tiers.'

The key recommendations from the Audit Commission for Local Strategic Partnerships are that local authorities and their partners should;

- Monitor and review local achievements against a regularly updated
- Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Local Area Agreement.
- Critically assess the costs and benefits of joint working arrangements
- Test their current arrangements using;
 - notable practice examples;
 - a whole systems model;
 - delivery chain analysis; and
 - social networking tools.
- Ensure that local arrangements support the strategic, executive and operational layers of joint working.
- Review progress, make decisions and challenge one another based on performance and resource information
- Engage elected members through training and development, and stronger partnership scrutiny

In 2006 The Home Office introduced Delivering Safer Communities: A Guide to Effective Partnership Working. This document introduced essential elements for effective partnership working providing six 'Hallmarks' of effective partnerships as a basis for good practice. Whilst this guidance is aimed primarily at Crime and Disorder Partnerships, these Hallmarks are generic to all partnerships and it states:

'The Hallmarks of effective Partnerships are intended to summarise the core elements of effective partnership working. They provide a way for partnerships to check if they are delivering effectively or if there are areas where they should target improvements. They flow from the views of our stakeholders, our own work in supporting improvements in partnership

performance at local level and from the Government's broader reform agenda'.

These six Hallmarks of effective practice are:

1. Empowered and Effective Leadership
2. Intelligence- led Business Processes
3. Effective and Responsive Delivery Systems
4. Engaged Communities
5. Visible and Constructive Accountability
6. Appropriate Skills and Knowledge

Pooled Budgets and Joint Commissioning

In addition it should be possible that as partnership arrangements mature, Rochford Local Strategic Partnership begins to further develop its financial arrangements. Most notably the LSP should attempt a degree of 'joining up resources'. In particular pooling and aligning resources to support some of the agreed priorities laid out by the Sustainable Communities Strategy should be an achievable goal within the next three years. In this way, it should be possible for the Rochford Local Strategic Partnership to develop its own and more sophisticated joint-commissioning arrangements.

Assessment and Development

To assist in the development of Rochford Local Strategic Partnership and those partnerships that are directly accountable to the main Executive of the LSP, partners are invited (with the assistance of the Local Strategic Partnership officers) to complete the following partnership self-assessment questionnaire for each of the partnerships that make up the Rochford Local Strategic Partnership. It is recognised that given the two-tier make up of the area and that some of the sub-partnerships are shared with Castle Point Local Strategic Partnership a single and all encompassing approach may not be possible.

Partnership Self Assessment Questionnaire

The questionnaire is based on the recommendations of the Audit Commissions Working better together: Managing local strategic partnerships and the Home Office Delivering Safer Communities: A Guide to Effective Partnership Working and is designed to highlight areas of development and support improved partnership working.

The intention of this exercise is to more formally ascertain the health of the partnerships that exist under the auspices of the LSP. That they are all working towards an agreed set of shared principles and standards of operation. Furthermore the results of the self assessment can be used by the LSP Executive to annually assess the partnership.

1. Empowered & Effective Leadership

- 1.1** Do you have an effective governance structure that is able to provide strategic leadership for your partnership?
- 1.2** Does the partnership involve senior representatives from relevant partners?
- 1.3** Are other bodies and agencies represented as appropriate?
- 1.4** Do you have a clear process for reviewing the chair?
- 1.5** Do you need a locally elected member with responsibility for the reason for the partnership sitting on this body? If so, who is best placed to fulfil this role?
- 1.6** Do you have a clear meeting structure?
- 1.7** Do you need any additional protocols to govern processes where there has been confusion or disagreement in the past?
- 1.8** Have you ensured that there are actions ascribed to relevant partners?
- 1.9** Have you considered ownership of any individual action plans?
- 1.10** Within your strategy group, are you able to constructively challenge each other in order to improve performance?
- 1.11** Are the right people from the right organisations involved in the partnership?
- 1.12** Is the District wide or Sub-District partnership group accountable to a countywide body?
- 1.13** Are the appropriate information and data sharing arrangements in place?
- 1.14** Do the personnel involved understand the legislation relating to information sharing and are they equipped to solve any information sharing problems?

2. Intelligence-led Business Processes

- 2.1** Do you have an information sharing protocol?
- 2.2** Are there other parties who could sign up to, and comply with, the protocol?
- 2.3** Do you share personal data when necessary and appropriate to do so?
- 2.4** Do you have all the additional information from partners that you need to build a profile of your community and the community needs that your partnership aims to impact upon?
- 2.5** Do you have a process for ensuring that district level priorities are fed into the Local Area Agreement?
- 2.6** Have you embedded problem-solving and evaluation processes within your business planning?
- 2.7** Are you clear on the priorities for your area, based on what the community thinks and what your information says?
- 2.8** Have conducted or made sufficient links with appropriate strategic assessments available in your area?
- 2.9** Have you ensured that you have worked together as a partnership to identify those most vulnerable and at risk?
- 2.10** Does your plan contain details of how you will measure performance against priorities?
- 2.11** Have you ensured that the decisions made have been influenced by the priorities that you have identified and also the ability to deliver?
- 2.12** Is there a clear process for allocating tasks and resources to delivery groups, bodies and individuals?
- 2.13** Do you have a process for weighing up emerging issues with existing priorities?
- 2.14** Do you have a process for deciding which projects to evaluate?
- 2.15** Have you embedded the need to evaluate within these projects?
- 2.16** Have you made resources available to carry out evaluation?

3. Effective and Responsive Delivery Systems

3.1 Have you considered how you will resource the delivery of your priorities?

3.2 Have you maximised the opportunities for the joint delivery of actions?

3.3 Are you making the best use of other avenues for the publication of your partnership/action plan?

3.4 Do you have action groups structured around your key priorities?

3.5 Are these groups delivering what is required to meet the objectives set out in your partnership plan?

3.6 Are you able to respond flexibly to emerging issues within the community?

4. Engaged Communities

4.1 Does all the information gathered through community consultation feed into your priority-setting activities?

4.2 Are you targeting your community consultation activities to diverse groups within the community and those most likely to be affected by your priorities?

4.3 Have you ensured that aspects of your partnership/action plan can be shared with the community?

4.4 Have you identified the correct medium for sharing information with the community, including those who are hard to reach and hard to hear?

4.5 Have you ensured that your partnership plan can be accessed by diverse communities?

4.6 Are you actively seeking ways to involve diverse groups within your community in problem solving initiatives?

5. Visible & Constructive Accountability

5.1 Have you ensured that the information collected from community engagement is included in the partnership plan?

5.2 Do you have appropriate structures and documents in place to ensure that all community members, including hard to reach and hard to hear communities, can be involved in any community meetings being scheduled?

5.3 Are the community aware of the community focused meetings being scheduled?

5.4 Are you taking steps to ensure that the community will receive regular feedback and update on the progress of the community?

5.5 Are all your partners aware of the existing processes and approaches adopted within agencies to engage and feedback to communities?

5.6 Are there effective performance management arrangements in place?

5.7 Does the strategy group consider 'Value for Money' when commissioning and evaluating projects?

5.8 Do you have a clear idea how effectively your previous partnership plan has been implemented?

5.9 Do you share the results of your evaluations with others?

Appropriate Skills & Knowledge

6.1 Is there a clear understanding amongst all partners of the purpose and aims of the partnership?

6.2 Is there clarity over the roles and responsibilities of those who make up the partnership?

6.3 Is there clarity over membership of the partnership, are there any identifiable gaps, and how frequently is the membership reviewed?

6.4 Does the person facilitating the sharing of information understand the objectives of the partnership and what can be shared and by whom?

6.5 Do all the partners understand the importance of sharing information?

6.6 Do you know the make-up of the communities you represent, including the groups and organisations within it?

6.7 Do you have adequate processes in place for listening to all sections of the community, including minority and hard to reach groups?

6.8 Do you understand any new requirements and or legislation and what they mean for the partnership?

6.9 Have you ensured that there are people within the partnership who can review the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the partnerships work?

6.10 Is there the analytical capacity/capability across the partnership to support its work?

6.11 Do you know that the messages of the partnership are reaching the intended audience?

6.12 Can the partnership identify areas, themes or issues for cross-partnership working?

6.13 Are you familiar with the planning processes and the links to other areas of partnership business?

6.14 Do you understand the various problem solving models and how they can be applied to the business of the partnership?

6.15 Do you have a process for learning from previous evaluations?

6.16 Do you understand what makes a good evaluation?