

Partnership Guidance



Contents

	Page
1	Introduction3
	Partnership Definition4
2	Why work in Partnership?4
3	Partnership Good Practice6
	New Partnerships6
	Existing Partnerships.....7
4	Implementation, and Review, of Partnerships7
5	Key Guidance.....8
	Appendix 1 – Key Partnerships.....10
	Appendix 2 – Hallmarks of Effective Partnerships11
	Empowered and Effective Leadership.....11
	Intelligence-led Business Processes11
	Engaged Communities12
	Visible and Constructive Accountability.....13
	Appropriate Skills and Knowledge.....13
	Appendix 3 – Questions for New Partnerships.....15

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Working in partnership is a key area for local authorities and other public bodies. It is a productive way of achieving more efficient and effective use of scarce resources to achieve desired outcomes.
- 1.2 Since local councils have been charged with the duty to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of their area, the scope for partnership working has increased enormously. An example of this kind of partnership working in the District can be found in Rochford's Local Strategic Partnership. The Rochford LSP is a non-statutory multi-agency partnership which brings together, at a local level, the different parts of the private, public, community and voluntary sectors. The duty of the LSP is to prepare and implement a single co-ordinated framework of its long term vision for the District, as set out in the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS). Its vision: "Working in partnership to make our District a place which provides opportunities for the best possible quality of life for all who live, work and visit here". This vision is shared with the District Council. The objective of the SCS and for the LSP is to improve the economic, social and environmental well being of the local area.
- 1.3 In April 2011, the Rochford LSP agreed to merge with the Castle Point LSP and a Joint LSP across the two authorities has now been established. The Joint LSP builds on the shared partnership arrangements already in place and reflects the changing context of partnership working, with reduced and evolving funding streams, changing legislation and changing organisational structures. A Joint LSP should ensure that both Rochford and Castle Point are well placed to take advantage of emerging county-wide partnership arrangements and developing initiatives such as community budgeting and the "Big Society".
- 1.4 The Joint LSP operates at a strategic level but remains close enough to local people to allow them to be involved in decisions that affect their communities. Councils have worked together with other local partner bodies for decades. The term 'local strategic partnership' dates from the Local Government Act 2000. Local councils were then encouraged to draw up community strategies through LSPs. The importance of LSPs increased significantly with the subsequent Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' in 2006. This was reiterated in the July 2008 guidance from the Communities and Local Government, which defined responsibilities of the LSP in clear terms. These reflect the strengthened community leadership role that these partnerships are now expected to undertake and the District Council takes a lead role as the democratically elected body for the area.
- 1.5 However partnership working can be difficult to do well; it can be costly if not properly managed, and it may not deliver the desired outcomes if the aims and objectives are not clear.
- 1.6 External reviews of the Council have commented that the Authority "punches above its weight" in connection with the partnership agenda. It is nevertheless important for the Council to ensure that any new partnerships it enters into "add value" to the workings of the Authority and existing partnerships are regularly reviewed in this respect.
- 1.7 The principal purpose of this guidance is therefore to provide a framework against which to "test" potential new partnerships and examine existing ones, to ensure that the Council is reassured that the partnership under consideration is one which contributes positively to its agenda.

Partnership Definition

1.8 The term “partnership” has been defined by a variety of agencies, from the Audit Commission through to Central Government and various educational and research institutions. In this context, 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

1.9 On the basis of that definition, the key partnerships the Council is currently involved in is outlined in Appendix 1 (list will be updated on an annual basis)

2 Why work in Partnership?

2.1 Working in partnership can be a more productive way of delivering an outcome and utilising resources. From a District Council perspective, the key reasons for entering into partnership arrangements are as follows:

To support the Council’s overall vision and corporate aims

The Council vision is to make Rochford District a place which provides opportunities for the best possible quality of life for all who live, work and visit here. The Council has adopted four principal objectives. These are:

- making a difference to our people
- making a difference to our community
- making a difference to our environment
- making a difference to our local economy

2.2 **To meet Government requirements**

Central Government places duties on local organisations and agencies to work together in partnership. The Community Safety Partnership is an example of this, although the partnership work in this area also fits in with the Council’s aims outlined above.

Within this context, Central Government has published guidance that introduces essential elements for effective partnership working providing six ‘Hallmarks’ of effective partnerships as a basis for good practice (**Delivering Safer Communities: A guide to effective partnership working**).

Whilst this guidance is aimed primarily at Community Safety Partnerships, it also 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:

- Empowered and Effective Leadership
 - Intelligence- led Business Processes
 - Effective and Responsive Delivery Systems
 - Engaged Communities
 - Visible and Constructive Accountability
 - Appropriate Skills and Knowledge
- As good practice; the Council is including these Hallmarks as part of the ‘Partnership Guidance’ document and intends to share this with the key partners it is involved with. The elements within the Hallmarks of effective practice are outlined in Appendix 2.

2.3 **To ensure that the Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2021 is delivered effectively**

There were a range of mechanisms, local, regional and national in place designed to support the work of the Sustainable Community Strategy. However, following the general election in May 2010 and the formation of the coalition government, the Local Strategic Partnership recognised that there would be significant amendments in the coming year. In June 2010 the Comprehensive Area Assessments were scrapped.

In October 2010, The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government wrote to the Leaders of all Councils and the Chief Executives of all Councils announcing important changes, the end of Local Area Agreements (LAA) and the National Indicator Set. Under section 109 of the Local Government and Public Involvement on Health Act 2007, all designations of local improvement targets in Local Area Agreements and the requirement to prepare a new agreement from April 2011 were revoked.

The Rochford Sustainable Community Strategy continues to provide the long term vision, aspirations and objectives for the District. The strategy was designed and developed through consultation with the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.

The Sustainable Community Strategy process has provided 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

2.4 **To assist our partners to meet their aims where it can be demonstrated that such working would be of benefit to the communities that make up Rochford District**

This may be particularly important in the context of securing additional external sources of funding.

3 Partnership Good Practice

New Partnerships

- 3.1 Before entering into any new partnerships, the Council needs to satisfy itself around a range of issues. In particular, the Council needs to be clear about the following:
- There is a clear rationale for the partnership; and
 - It will provide added value; and
 - Governance arrangements are clear; and
 - Performance management, financial management and risk management are accounted for;
 - Termination arrangements are understood
 - There is an appropriate authorisation process for any financial or other liabilities to be incurred by the partnership and/or the Council.
- 3.2 Before entering into any new partnership you should make the People and Policy Manager aware to ensure that the appropriate and necessary guidance can be given. The Senior Management Team (SMT) will also need to be informed of new partnerships being developed.

- 3.3 To assist new partnerships in ensuring that they meet the above issues, a series of questions will be asked and a risk assessment completed. Questions for New Partnerships are outlined in Appendix 3.

Existing Partnerships

- 3.4 In connection with existing partnerships, the Council will review each of its main partnership arrangements on a rolling programme every three years.
- 3.5 On an annual basis each partnership will be formally asked in March by the Council's lead officer of each partnership for details of its:
- Terms of reference
 - Governance arrangements
 - Funding arrangements and management
 - Performance management details
- 3.6 In addition, each Partnership will be requested to remind each of its key participants of their roles and responsibilities in connection with the Partnership and to reconfirm their commitment to the partnership.
- 3.7 For the purposes of any review of existing partnerships in terms of the Council's continuing commitment, the Council will wish to satisfy itself of:
- The need for the partnership to continue
 - The commitment, role and responsibilities of the various partners
 - The value of the partnership to the Council and its own role and responsibilities within the partnership
 - The governance, performance management, financial and risk management arrangements of the partnership
 - Any contingent liabilities which may result from disengagement with the Partnership.
- 3.8 The questions covered in reviewing existing partnerships will be similar to those outlined above in respect of new partnerships. Such reviews should be reported to SMT.

4 Implementation, and Review, of Partnerships

- 4.1 Where a potential new partnership is emerging, the relevant Divisional Head will undertake an assessment and report his/her conclusions into the Executive where appropriate. It can then be assessed as to whether the new partnership is likely to contribute to or complement the work undertaken by the Authority.

- 4.2 Before any new partnership is formally instigated, the appropriate authority must be obtained from SMT, and/or the Executive. Authorisation should also demonstrate that the relevant criteria in section 3 above are satisfied, and that the “Questions for New Partnerships” shown at Appendix 3 have been satisfactorily answered.
- 4.3 The responsible Head of Service/Lead Officer for each partner should ensure that, at minimum, an annual review is undertaken of the partnership’s effectiveness and continuation. The reviews should include an assessment of the outcomes achieved by each partnership, including appropriate targets, performance measures, risk management arrangements, financial information/controls, and the value of the partnership to the Council. Such reviews should be reported into SMT and it will be for the appropriate partnership Lead Officer to reaffirm commitment to a particular partnership or to recommend disengagement as appropriate.
- 4.4 The Council’s Audit & Performance Management team will audit the above mentioned annual review arrangements for each partnership in terms of the coverage and content of the review. A summary of this review will be prepared for the Council’s Audit Committee for consideration and comment.
- 4.5 In addition, the Audit & Performance Management team will undertake review of specific partnerships, with input from relevant Divisions, as may be required and agreed. Once an assessment has been made, a report will be prepared for the Council’s Audit Committee for consideration and comment. The Audit Report will identify any issues, whether financial or otherwise, and provide observations on the value of the partnership to the Council. Again, it will be for the appropriate partnership lead officer to reaffirm commitment to a particular partnership or to recommend disengagement as appropriate to SMT.
- 4.6 The Review Committee may also wish to comment and make recommendations in respect of each Partnership.

5 Key Guidance

- 5.1 The Local Government Improvement and Development website offers up-to-date guidance on effective partnership working. The coalition government is committed to a radical devolution of power and greater financial autonomy to local government and community groups. Strengthened collaboration across the public sector will be an important source of efficiencies and savings. Effective local partnerships will be critical to reconfiguring services.
- 5.2 The guidance reiterates the description of partnerships as a joint working arrangement where the partners:
- are otherwise independent bodies
 - agree to cooperate to achieve a common goal
 - create a new organisational structure or process to achieve this goal, separate from their own organisations

- plan and implement a jointly-agreed programme, often with joint staff or resources
 - share relevant information
 - pool risks and rewards.
 - Partnerships and integrated working require a culture of shared ownership and common working arrangements across organisational and professional boundaries.
- 5.3 The guidance suggests the primary purpose of partnership working is to improve the experience and outcomes of people who use services. This is achieved by minimising organisational barriers between different services.
- 5.4 A recent survey of local authorities and primary care trusts (PCTs) identified the three most helpful factors to local partnership working as; friendly relationships, leadership and “commitment from the top”, which means that councillors have a key role to play in fostering partnerships.
- 5.5 Partnerships and integrated working can help councils improve services and be more cost effective in a number of ways, including:
- deciding on priorities in the context of productivity and efficiency
 - single assessment processes so that people do not need to undergo multiple assessments by different agencies
 - agreeing eligibility and shared access arrangements with others
 - improving user experience by integrating care and support and extending choice
 - achieving greater efficiency by minimising duplication, improving coordination and sharing buildings and resources
 - aligning or ring-fencing resources or pooling budgets to achieve efficiencies and better outcomes
 - taking a holistic, multi-agency approach to shifting resources into early intervention and prevention of increasing need.

Appendix 1 – Key Partnerships

- Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership (CEX)
- Joint Castle Point and Rochford Local Strategic Partnership (PPM)
- Community Safety Partnership (HCS)
- Thames Gateway Area Waste Joint Committee (HES)
- Community Development Partnership (PPM)
- Essex On Line Partnership (HICS)
- Castle Point & Rochford Domestic Abuse Panel (HCS)
- Essex Waste Management Advisory Board (HES)
- Ground Work Trust South Essex (HES)
- The Procurement Agency for Essex (CEX)
- Thames Gateway South Essex Housing Strategy Forum (HCS)
- South East Essex Local Children’s Commissioning and Delivery Partnership (HCS)
- Health and Wellbeing Partnership (HCS)
- Rochford Schools Partnership (CEX)
- Public Law Partnership (formerly Essex Legal Services Partnership) (HLEMS)
- Vine HR Partnerships (PPM)

Key:

- CEX – Chief Executive
- PPM – People and Policy Manager
- HCS – Head of Community Services
- HPT – Head of Planning and Transportation
- HLEMS – Head of Legal, Estates & Member Services
- HES – Head of Environmental Services
- HICS – Head of Information & Customer Services
- LSP – Local Strategic Partnership (JLSP Joint Local Strategic Partnership)

Appendix 2 – Hallmarks of Effective Partnerships

Empowered and Effective Leadership

1. Do you have an effective governance structure that is able to provide strategic leadership for your partnership?
2. Does the partnership involve senior representatives from relevant partners?
3. Are other bodies and agencies represented as appropriate?
4. Do you have a clear process for reviewing the chair?
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?
6. Do you have a clear meeting structure?
7. Do you need any additional protocols to govern processes where there has been confusion or disagreement in the past?
8. Have you ensured that there are actions ascribed to relevant partners?
9. Have you considered ownership of any individual action plans?
10. Within your strategy group, are you able to constructively challenge each other in order to improve performance?
11. Are the right people from the right organisations involved in the partnership?
12. Is the District wide or Sub-District partnership group accountable to a countywide body?
13. Are the appropriate information and data sharing arrangements in place?
14. Do the personnel involved understand the legislation relating to information sharing and are they equipped to solve any information sharing problems?

Intelligence-led Business Processes

1. Do you have an information sharing protocol?
2. Are there other parties who could sign up to, and comply with, the protocol?
3. Do you share personal data when necessary and appropriate to do so?
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?
5. Do you have a process for ensuring that district level priorities are fed into the Local Area Agreement?

6. Have you embedded problem-solving and evaluation processes within your business planning?
7. Are you clear on the priorities for your area, based on what the community thinks and what your information says?
8. Have conducted or made sufficient links with appropriate strategic assessments available in your area?
9. Have you ensured that you have worked together as a partnership to identify those most vulnerable and at risk?
10. Does your plan contain details of how you will measure performance against priorities?
11. Have you ensured that the decisions made have been influenced by the priorities that you have identified and also the ability to deliver?
12. Is there a clear process for allocating tasks and resources to delivery groups, bodies and individuals?
13. Do you have a process for weighing up emerging issues with existing priorities?
14. Do you have a process for deciding which projects to evaluate?
15. Have you embedded the need to evaluate within these projects?
16. Have you made resources available to carry out evaluation?
17. Effective and Responsive Delivery Systems
18. Have you considered how you will resource the delivery of your priorities?
19. Have you maximised the opportunities for the joint delivery of actions?
20. Are you making the best use of other avenues for the publication of your partnership/action plan?
21. Do you have action groups structured around your key priorities?
22. Are these groups delivering what is required to meet the objectives set out in your partnership plan?
23. Are you able to respond flexibly to emerging issues within the community?

Engaged Communities

1. Does all the information gathered through community consultation feed into your priority-setting activities?
2. Are you targeting your community consultation activities to diverse groups within the community and those most likely to be affected by your priorities?

3. Have you ensured that aspects of your partnership/action plan can be shared with the community?
4. Have you identified the correct medium for sharing information with the community, including those who are hard to reach and hard to hear?
5. Have you ensured that your partnership plan can be accessed by diverse communities?
6. Are you actively seeking ways to involve diverse groups within your community in problem solving initiatives?

Visible and Constructive Accountability

1. Have you ensured that the information collected from community engagement is included in the partnership plan?
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?
3. Are the community aware of the community focused meetings being scheduled?
4. Are you taking steps to ensure that the community will receive regular feedback and update on the progress of the community?
5. Are all your partners aware of the existing processes and approaches adopted within agencies to engage and feedback to communities?
6. Are there effective performance management arrangements in place?
7. Does the strategy group consider 'Value for Money' when commissioning and evaluating projects?
8. Do you have a clear idea how effectively your previous partnership plan has been implemented?
9. Do you share the results of your evaluations with others?

Appropriate Skills and Knowledge

1. Is there a clear understanding amongst all partners of the purpose and aims of the partnership?
2. Is there clarity over the roles and responsibilities of those who make up the partnership?
3. Is there clarity over membership of the partnership, are there any identifiable gaps, and how frequently is the membership reviewed?
4. Does the person facilitating the sharing of information understand the objectives of the partnership and what can be shared and by whom?

5. Do all the partners understand the importance of sharing information?
6. Do you know the make-up of the communities you represent, including the groups and organisations within it?
7. Do you have adequate processes in place for listening to all sections of the community, including minority and hard to reach groups?
8. Do you understand any new requirements and or legislation and what they mean for the partnership?
9. Have you ensured that there are people within the partnership who can review the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the partnerships work?
10. Is there the analytical capacity/capability across the partnership to support its work?
11. Do you know that the messages of the partnership are reaching the intended audience?
12. Can the partnership identify areas, themes or issues for cross-partnership working?
13. Are you familiar with the planning processes and the links to other areas of partnership business?
14. Do you understand the various problem solving models and how they can be applied to the business of the partnership?
15. Do you have a process for learning from previous evaluations?
16. Do you understand what makes a good evaluation?

Appendix 3 – Questions for New Partnerships

- Why the partnership is required?
- Who are the main potential partners?
- Are those partners clear about their involvement and commitment?
- Is there agreement around the purpose of the partnership?
- How will the partnership add value to what the Council is doing? Can that value be demonstrated to the public?
- How will it contribute to the reasons for Council involvement outlined above?
- What inputs will the Council have to make in Member and officer time, funding, use of assets, etc?
- How the Council's corporate governance arrangements link into the partnership and the other main partners?
- What authority/powers will the Partnership have?
- How decisions are to be taken and recorded?
- Where accountability for those decisions and their action will rest?
- How, if relevant, they will be scrutinised
- How the performance of the partnership is to be managed and assessed?
- How are the finances to be managed?
- How are risks/liabilities to be managed and addressed?
- What the termination arrangements will be if the partnership comes to an end or if the Council decides to pull out?
- Where the partnership will be serving the public, what arrangements will be in place to ensure effective public communications and where things do go wrong or complaints/suggestions are raised by the public, how these will be addressed?
- What arrangements have been made for partnership employed staff?

Before entering into any new partnership you should make the People and Policy Manager aware to ensure that the appropriate and necessary guidance can be given.



Rochford District Council
Council Offices South Street
Rochford Essex SS4 1BW
Phone: 01702 546366
customerservices@rochford.gov.uk
Website: www.rochford.gov.uk



**INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE**

Gold