LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL

Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL

FRAMEWORK FOR PARTNERSHIP WORKING

November 2004

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1. Introduction

1.1 Working in partnership with other organisations to deliver both individual and jointly agreed outcomes is now a core requirement in delivering effective public services. Due to recent legislation and other policy initiatives local authorities are increasingly expected to initiate, lead and engage in partnership working.

1.2 Partnerships are considered to be a more effective way to tackle highly resistant and complex problems. A partnership approach ensures co-ordinated action by agencies across a range of service and policy areas.

1.3 Partnerships also ensure that businesses, the voluntary sector and the community get involved, thus enabling them to identify problems and root causes, contribute their unique skills and perspectives, and play a part in developing consensus and ownership. It can also be a more efficient and effective use of scarce resources.

2. Purpose of the Framework for Partnership Working

2.1 The purpose of this framework is to provide a checklist for officers of Lancaster City Council who are considering involving the Council in either a partnership body or a partnering contract.

2.2 Every partnership body and partnering contract will have its own characteristics and it is not possible to cover every eventuality. The general information set out below, and use of the relevant checklist should, however, provide a good basis for serving to make the partnership work and to achieving the benefits of working in partnership.

3. Partnership Working and the Council's Corporate Plan

3.1 The Corporate Plan for 2004/05 is aligned with the **Lancaster District Community Strategy - A Vision for the Year 2020** and sets the Council's ambition of: *'A vibrant district recognised for its high and sustainable quality of life, arising from social well-being, care for our environment and economic opportunity'*.

3.2 The Council has demonstrated its strong commitment to partnership working by adopting the ten themes of its Community Strategy as its Strategic Objectives in the Corporate Plan, and the Council believes that effective partnership working has a key role to play in the achievement of these objectives. This fundamental commitment is underpinned by the Council's core values, and in particular the core values relating to Community Leadership and Partnership and Improving Services which state:

- **Community Leadership and Partnership** - *'We will bring the community together to deal with the major issues facing our District and work with our Partners to deliver real improvement'*

- **Improving Services -** *'We're committed to finding the best way to provide the services that meet our needs'*

3.3 The Council's Corporate Plan clearly identifies the importance of partnership working in achieving objectives across a wide range of areas of work and it is important that we understand how effective these arrangements are. With this in mind the Council has recently embarked on a phased programme of reviews, using a **Partnership Assessment Tool**, aimed at assessing the effectiveness of individual partnerships in contributing to the achievement of the Council's Strategic objectives.

3.4 The Partnership Assessment Tool has been designed explicitly as a development tool aimed at providing a simple, quick and cost-effective way of assessing the effectiveness of partnership working. As such it provides a practical way of:

- Helping newly formed partnerships to explore the views and aspirations of those embarking on a new venture. It provides a developmental framework for establishing a healthy and effective partnership by, amongst other things, highlighting what to avoid.

- Helping established partnerships take stock on a routine basis of how effective their process of partnership working is (i.e. provides an opportunity for a routine audit or health check)

- Helping partnerships which are experiencing difficulties to identify systematically areas of conflict (and consensus) and to move towards a remedial action plan. In such instances the value of the tool is diagnostic.

4. What is a Partnership Arrangement?

4.1 There is no authoritative definition of partnership arrangements in this context but the Council has adopted the following general definition of partnership working: '*Those agreed methods of working together as an integrated and co-ordinated team to achieve common objectives and shared benefits.*'

4.2 The following are considered to be the main policy drivers and types of partnership that will be subject to this framework:

- **Local Government Modernisation**

  Local authorities need to help ensure the 'social, economic and environmental well-being of the area' by developing local Community Strategies through a strategic partnership with other public sector service providers and the private and community and voluntary sector on a multi-agency basis. The Council strives to achieve this through the Lancaster District Strategic Partnership (LSP) which was formed in 2001 following publication of the DTLR consultation paper on LSP's in October 2000.

  Neighbourhood renewal is developed through community strategies and involves ward or neighbourhood level partnerships such as the Poulton Neighbourhood Management Board set up in 2002, overseeing a seven-year programme for the renewal of the Poulton Area.

- **Partnerships between different parts of the Council or between County and district tiers**

  The increasing emphasis on cross-cutting approach in national, regional and local policy calls for greater corporate 'joining up'. Key links between Council Services include those between the Community Safety Partnership and Engineering and Leisure Services, and between Council Housing and Social Services. Initiatives such as the LSP and the Community Safety Partnership (set up under the legislative framework of the Crime and Disorder Act) also require greater joint working between county and district councils.

  Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides for two or more local authorities wishing to undertake joint activities to set up a joint committee. An example of this would be the setting up of a joint committee for purchasing across more than one Council area. The Council has carried out joint working with Barrow-in-Furness and South Lakeland District Councils.

- **Local Partnerships focused on key objectives and strategies**

  Government departments have initiated a range of partnership-based policy initiatives, requiring local partnerships to be developed around specific objectives and areas of service delivery. Some of these are statutory and include local partnerships such as the Local Agenda 21 Partnership formed in November 2001, and closer working with health bodies through, for example, the Council's partnership with the Morecambe Bay Primary Care and Acute Hospitals Trusts.

- **Funding-led partnerships**

  Many funders require partnerships to be established in order to administer and oversee the spending of project funds. Such funding includes Single Regeneration Budget and European funding for an Economic Development Zone (EDZ) being overseen by the Lancaster District Regeneration Partnership and the Carnforth and Area Regeneration Partnership.

- **Regional partnerships**

  The regional agenda places a new emphasis on the regional tier of partnership working. Partnerships at this geographical level often deal with economic development and regeneration issues. At this level the Council works with the Lancashire West Partnership, Regional Development Agencies and Regional Government Offices, amongst others.

- **National partnerships**

  Local Authorities can get involved in national debate and decision-making through developing links with national local government organisations, such as the Local Government Association (LGA); through work with other national organisations, and directly with Government working groups and programmes.

- **Charities and Trusts**

  Increasingly, local authorities have been setting up bodies with charitable status to provide services that had previously been provided directly by the local authority, in areas such as housing, leisure and social services.

- **Companies**

  Sometimes it can be advantageous for Councils to be involved in setting up companies for specific purposes. Such partnerships become a body corporate in their own right having their own legal status. These can be companies limited by shares or guarantee, where the partner's liability for any company debt is limited to the guarantee they made when the company was formed - normally a notional amount. They are usually not-for-profit bodies with income being ploughed back into the partnership activities. They can enter into contracts on their own, buy and sell assets, sue and be sued and distribute assets on dissolution.

  Such partnerships are regulated by the Companies Act 1985, although similar arrangements can be made using Industrial and Provident Societies, which would be a company under the control of the Registrar of Friendly Societies and therefore outside mainstream Company Law.

- **Partnering Contracts**

  Partnering is one of the more advanced contract management techniques, which embraces joint management process measurement and improvement tools to achieve enhanced contract performance and improved customer service.

  One of the important elements of partnering is that partners share the benefits and the risks in an agreed and quantifiable manner. For example, cost savings could be shared, as could profit, and both parties will share common objectives focused on achieving the desired outcome, and will have equal access to, and openly share, information and knowledge.

  Through 'Re-thinking Construction' (the Egan Report) Government are keen for local authorities to explore new ways of working and part of that agenda is to avoid the adversarial nature of some contracts through working in partnership with the private sector. More detailed guidance on partnering as a contracting activity is provided in the 'Procurement through Partnering Guidelines'

4.3 The types of partnership outlined above, whist not exhaustive, cover the main areas of partnership working, although it should be noted that other collaborative working is promoted by the Council as a necessary and beneficial element of providing efficient and effective services. In addition, the Council actively supports town and parish councils that are working towards achieving Quality Parish Council status.

5.   Why enter into a Partnership?

5.1   Partnerships play a key role in the delivery of community strategies and in helping to promote and improve the well being of the Lancaster district. The Council will continue to deliver services, but recognises its distinctive leadership role in bringing together the contributions of its various stakeholders, including public sector agencies; private companies; community groups and voluntary organisations. Partnership working helps the Council to deliver a shared vision of services based on user wishes.

5.2   The main reasons for entering into a partnership are:

- **Co-ordination**

  Systematic and regular communication between partners helps to avoid duplicating each other's work or inadvertently working against each other. It also helps partners find new ways to share risk and benefits and allows agencies to plan further ahead more confidently.

- **Creating more for less**

  By pooling resources partners can achieve economies of scale and look at ways of accessing additional resources.

- **Tackling complex problems**

  By bringing a broader range of perspectives, knowledge, information, strengths and skills to bear partners can provide new and better ways of delivering services and implementing actions to tackle complex or multi-dimensional problems.

- **Building Consensus**

  Partners can work together to find mutually acceptable solutions and proposals, thereby building relationships and developing joint ownership and commitment. Partners can also deal with differences of interest within a partnership in a co-ordinated and constructive way, rather than working against each other outside of one.

6.   What is involved in setting up a partnership arrangement?

Council's Interests

6.1   In developing any partnership body or partnering contract, it is necessary to fulfil the following two basic requirements: -

- ensure that the essential elements of local governance, accountability and transparency are maintained within the proposed new arrangements for service delivery, and;

- that any risks associated with the proposed new arrangement for service delivery have been assessed and procedures put in place to effectively manage those risks.

Partner Relationships

6.2   A partnership body and/or a partnering contract will involve a relationship between parties which is designed to serve shared objectives based on: -

- a shared understanding of those objectives, and the aspirations of the parties;

- a non-confrontational relationship based on trust and openness, but nevertheless the need for formal arrangements to be established;

- a recognition of the diverse skills and expertise of the parties facilitating development and innovation;

- a recognition of the need to share the benefits resulting from joint working;

- a sharing of information; and

- the need to work closely towards the resolution of disputes that may arise, to avoid wherever possible recourse to more formal procedures.

Legal and Financial Relationships

6.3   Partnership bodies and partnering contracts involve complex legal and financial relationships. It is, therefore, essential that the Head of Legal Services and the Head of Financial Services are contacted at the outset whenever consideration is being given to involving the Council in either of these types of relationship.

6.4   Advice and support on effective controls to ensure that resources are not wasted and on the key elements for funding and managing the project will be provided by the Head of Financial Services and the Head of Legal Services. This may include:

- a scheme appraisal for financial viability in the current and future years, in line with the Council's Financial Strategy;

- risk appraisal and risk management;

- resourcing implications and taxation issues;

- audit, security and control requirements;

- budgetary and accounting arrangements;

- insurance and procurement issues;

- application of Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations;

- consideration of potential liabilities that could be imposed on the Council;

- arrangements for reporting partnership issues to Members and for consulting with current and potential partners.

Other Professional/Specialist Advice

6.5   Depending upon the particular partnership arrangements being entered into, it will be advisable to involve other relevant professionals/specialists. The officer instigating the partnership arrangement should, at the earliest opportunity and in discussion with colleagues throughout the Council, identify what other professional/specialist advice, such as advice from Personnel Services, needs to be taken and make the necessary arrangements.

Cabinet Approval

6.6   A report should be presented to Cabinet for approval for the partnership arrangement to be entered into. The report should take into account the professional/specialist advice, as referred to above, and set out the aims and objectives of the partnership. The report should also, nominate the Council's lead officer in respect of the partnership and set out the arrangements and frequency for reporting to Members on the performance of the partnership against its stated objectives. In this respect, annual reporting of the partnership's activities should be regarded as the minimum frequency.

6.7   Where any partnership arrangements are entered into, actions should also be taken to ensure that all partner organisations, including the Council, sign up to an agreed Protocol for Communication and the Sharing of Information.

6.8   Scrutinising the appropriate **Partnership Body** or **Partnering checklist** together with any other relevant individual circumstances should allow these requirements to be fulfilled.

7.   What are the key features of a successful partnership?

7.1   Effective partnerships can make all the difference but can be time and resource intensive, and without a clear focus resources can be spread too thinly and their impact dissipated. Government exceptions are high and there needs to be a continuing drive for efficiency and effectiveness in partnership working.

7.2   The key features of a successful partnership, as set out in the Partnership Assessment Tool, are:

Action Focused

- Shared values and agreed long-term vision of what it wants to achieve

- Effective use of input and feedback from local community and businesses

- Makes a positive impact, adding value and ensuring it is not working in isolation

Efficient organisation

- Structure is conducive to decision-making with members reflecting the views of the agencies they represent

- Resources matched to aims, objectives and plans

- Effective administrative support and communications

Inclusive Approach

- Membership reflects the purpose of the partnership
- Ensures that all partners have the capacity and commitment to be fully engaged in the partnership
- Works democratically with accountability to stakeholders and decisions open to scrutiny

Commitment to learn and develop

- Learns from best practice, stakeholders and consultations
- Makes use of a range of skills and expertise of partnership members
- Adapts to a changing environment

Effective performance management

- Process includes clear milestones, outcomes, performance indicators and delivery dates
- Partners deliver what they have signed up to and share information to support planning and management
- Partners resources used effectively to meet the aims of the partnership

7.3 The partnership will need to develop an action plan that clearly sets out actions, responsibilities of individual partners and timeframes. This plan should not be rushed, but should be developed promptly after the goals and objectives of the partnership have been agreed, otherwise there will be a risk of delays and confusion arising. The partnership should manage and monitor the action plan and address delays and problems as a team, reviewing the plan as appropriate.

Partnership Body Checklist

Name of Partnership:	
Partners:	
Commencement date and intended duration:	
Purpose of partnership:	

	Control	Commentary Refer to supporting documentation
1	**About the partnership**	
Capability		
1.1	Is there a business case which:- • Defines clear service objectives and an agreed and achievable long-term vision? • Analyses the risk?	
1.2	Is there measurable added value to be gained through partnership working? What benefits will be achieved for, the City Council, Partners and Citizens?	
1.3	Have the resource implications for the Council in terms of manpower and finance been identified as available?	
1.4	Has an assessment been made of the required linkages between partnership objectives and priorities and those of the Council?	
Partners		
1.5	Is the Membership both representative of the views of the organisations they represent (ensure appropriate seniority of commitment and engagement), and appropriate for the agreed purpose and objectives?	
1.6	Is there widespread ownership within the partner organisations and have potential barriers to success for any given partnership been identified?	
1.7	Have full contact details of partner organisations and their representatives been obtained?	
1.8	Has a clear framework for partner responsibilities and accountabilities, including Council officers and Members been established?	
1.9	Has an assessment been made to ensure that the partners have the skills, capacity and commitment to be fully engaged in the partnership?	
1.10	Have the contributions to be made by partners (e.g. financial, manpower, or contribution in kind) been established and agreed?	
1.11	On what terms will contributions be made and on what basis will they be valued?	

	Control	Commentary Refer to supporting documentation
1	**About the partnership (continued)**	
Funding of the Partnership		
1.12	In addition to partner contributions will the partnership require finance, capital and/or revenue, to deliver its aims and objectives?	
1.13	If so, on what terms is any funding to be made available, e.g. how will the contribution be shared amongst the partners and how will it be adjusted for inflation?	
1.14	Have all cost been included and apportioned accordingly? E.g. • Administration & management costs; • Cost of support Services i.e. Finance & Personnel; • Premises costs and use of other assets; • Insurance costs; • Sick pay of employees when partners are contributing staff time; • Potential liabilities e.g. cost implications where a partner withdraws from the arrangement or reduces their contribution	
1.15	Is any third party funding required? If so, who is the funder, what is the amount required and on what terms and conditions will it be made available?	
1.16	Should the partnership receive grant income have partners agreed that they will comply with the specified requirements and will provide the information required?	
Risk		
1.17	Have the potential risks associated with the partnership been considered, evaluated and placed where they can best be managed?	
1.18	Is there an effective system for identifying control and risk management issues, which considers: • What is the probability of a risk materialising – high, medium or low? • What would be the impact – high, medium or low? • How can the risk be minimised, managed or mitigated? Risks with a high probability and high impact demand most attention.	
1.19	Are there effective risk assessment and transfer, insurance and exit arrangements?	

	Control	Commentary Refer to supporting documentation
2	**Constitution**	
2.1	Is there a written constitution?	
2.2	Does it define membership of the partnership and who will be Chair and Vice-Chair?	
2.3	Does it cover such issues as: • How meetings will be conducted e.g. where meetings will take place, frequency, notice and quorum? • The recording and distribution of agendas and minutes? Who will provide this role?	
2.4	Does it identify: • The voting entitlement of representatives at partnership meetings? • How any conflict between the interests of a partner representative and a matter being considered by the board must be declared? • The resolution of conflict between partners? • How changes to the Constitution will be approved? • Each partner's responsibility in terms of Financial liability (i.e. is it limited/shared)? • Who owns any assets and balances resulting from the partnership? • Exit clauses and a mechanism for other variations to the agreement?	
3	**Governance**	
3.1	Will a separate corporate governance framework be established or will an existing framework be adopted?	
3.2	Does the partnership have defined clear service objectives and an agreed and achievable long-term vision?	
3.3	Will the partnership have effective support and administration arrangements?	
3.4	Is there an effective system and processes for holding the partnership to account?	
3.5	In what way is the partnership accountable to its stakeholders?	
3.6	What is the role of Lancaster City Council in the partnership?	
3.7	Are there effective mechanisms for reporting back from the partnership?	
3.8	What arrangements ensure that partnership works democratically and are processes and decisions open to scrutiny and challenge?	

	Control	Commentary Refer to supporting documentation
3	**Governance (continued)**	
3.9	Is the overall purpose known and understood outside the partnership?	
3.10	Are the aims and objectives clear and agreed by relevant leading Councillors/Cabinet?	
3.11	Is there an agreed process for decision-making? To which statutory and voluntary bodies is the partnership accountable?	
3.12	Are there effective systems and processes to ensure fairness in the conduct of the partnership and to build up trust between partners?	
3.13	Is there a process to receive feedback to and from partner organisations?	
3.14	What are the operational partnership arrangements? Are they clear and concise, time limited and task orientated?	
3.15	Is there a process for self-assessment, which measures partnership development and not purely easily quantifiable performance information?	
3.16	What is the impact of the partnership on the Council as a whole? (i.e. sense of leadership)	
3.17	Does the partnership arrangement recognise that Councillors have a unique role, and consider what they can bring to each partnership? This could include: • Democratic public accountability: • As representative of the community; • Responsibility for key local services; • Overall strategic knowledge and understanding; • Link to local communities and neighbourhoods; • As a voice for the socially excluded; • Personal skills, commitment and dedication.	
3.18	Consider the most effective process for Member scrutiny of the partnership. This could be: • Scrutinising the performance of partnerships through the overview and scrutiny function, or; • A Cabinet Member/Officer reviewing partnership performance and the Scrutiny committee taking an overview of the effectiveness of the process	
3.19	Is there a process for effective and timely reporting back on partnership working to Council Members?	
3.20	How does the partnership contribute to the priorities outlined in the Lancaster District Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan?	

	Control	Commentary Refer to supporting documentation
3	**Governance (continued)**	
3.21	Is the partnership's contribution to the Community Strategy considered as part of the annual report/review of the partnership?	
Note: The partnership will require an effective corporate governance framework, including Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Procedures and Schemes of Delegation. The corporate governance framework need not be separate from that of the 'lead' partner, but may vary depending on the reason for the partnership being established, how it is formed and managed and the degree of independence it has from its participating members.		
4	**Communication and Information Sharing**	
4.1	Have all parties signed up to a Protocol(s) for Communication and the Sharing of Information.	
4.2	Does the protocol promote relationships based on trust and openness and the need to share information for the benefit of the partnership and its stakeholders?	
4.3	Does the protocol incorporate the following: • contact details for each partner organisation; • responsibilities for the providing and issuing information; • responsibilities for carrying out consultation; • information standards, where appropriate; • information security and confidentiality; • timescales where relevant	
5	**Legal Responsibilities**	
5.1	What provision has been made for compliance with the law e.g. local government acts, procurement, health and safety, data protection, freedom of information, employment and service specific legislation?	
5.2	Is it necessary for the Partnership to have a formal computer security policy? If so what will this be based on (e.g. BS7799), and what will it cover?	
5.3	Who will be providing legal support to the partnership?	
6	**Financial Responsibilities**	
6.1	Will separate financial records for the partnership be maintained?	
6.2	Have required records been defined to ensure that all legal and other obligations are met?	
6.3	Is it clear how decisions on committing and reallocating partnership resources are made?	
6.4	Are systems in place to ensure that resources are properly accounted for?	

	Control	Commentary Refer to supporting documentation
6	**Financial Responsibilities (continued)**	
6.5	Who will be responsible for ensuring that financial records are maintained and kept?	

Note: If this is to be provided by, or on behalf of the partnership by one of the partners or an external organisation, accurate and complete accounting and financial records in accordance with applicable laws and accounting principles must be maintained.

6.6	Are there clear arrangements for financial management (budgets, planning etc) and finance administration (salaries, invoices, cash handling and banking etc)?	
6.7	Do partners receive regular and understandable financial information about the partnership?	
6.8	Have arrangements been made for internal/external audit as required?	
6.9	Who will fill the roles of treasurer, secretary, and auditor?	
6.10	Have insurance requirements been considered and advice sought e.g. personal indemnity, third party and vehicles?	
6.11	Has advice been sought on the VAT rules applying to the partnership and any other tax issues that are relevant?	
6.12	Is it clear how financial affairs will be dealt with after the partnership has ended? (including, e.g. how assets and any ongoing financial liabilities will be dealt with)	
7	**Staffing Responsibilities**	
Workforce Planning		
7.1	Are the staffing requirements of the partnership known and are there plans in place to meet these?	
7.2	Are the budget implications of workforce planning known and accounted for?	
7.3	If the partnership is time limited are plans in place for staff relocation/end of contracts?	
7.4	Who is responsible for recruiting, employing and training staff?	
7.5	What terms and conditions will the partnership have in place to deal with personnel issues, and have these been made clear to staff?	
7.6	Is staff clear about their roles and obligations in delivering the partnership objectives e.g. an awareness of legal liability and governance framework (particularly in the case of directors/trustees)?	

	Control	Commentary Refer to supporting documentation
7	**Staffing Responsibilities (continued)**	
Personnel Management		
7.7	Are line management arrangements for partnership staff clear?	
7.8	Has staff development and training requirements been identified and training given?	
7.9	Are staff required to make a declaration where there may be a conflict of interest?	
8	**Budgetary and Accounting Arrangements**	
8.1	Has a business plan been provided for the partnership that includes the following: • An estimate of the working capital requirements of the partnership incorporated within a cash flow statement; and, • An opening budget, including estimated capital and revenue expenditure requirements?	
8.2	Will monthly (or as otherwise required) management accounts and reports containing such information as shall reasonably be required, be prepared and despatched to partners?	
8.3	What are the arrangements for:- • Approving budgets on an annual basis or otherwise? • Monitoring expenditure? • Dealing with overspends/underspends?	
9	**Monitoring Service Delivery and Performance**	
9.1	Is there a service delivery plan including profiled budget and performance indicators? If so: • How many years does it span? • How regularly will it be updated?	
9.2	Has a clear performance management processes been developed for the partnership including indicators, target dates, milestones and outcomes?	
9.3	How will the performance of individual partners be monitored? Is there a process to check that all partners are effectively delivering agreed actions etc?	
9.4	Have all partners agreed critical success factors (both service aims and overall partnership objectives)?	
9.5	What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing how effectively the partnerships service aims and objectives are being met? How will this be reviewed and developed?	

	Control	Commentary Refer to supporting documentation
9	**Monitoring Service Delivery and Performance (continued)**	
9.6	What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing how effectively the partnership itself is working? How will this be reviewed and developed?	
9.7	Is there a process for reviewing and disseminating performance and monitoring information? How will this be developed?	
9.8	Does the partnership have measurable Key Performance Indicators?	
9.9	Are the roles and responsibilities and accountability for the achievement of the KPI's clear?	
9.10	Is there a process for the regular consideration and revision of partnership aims, objectives and arrangements? As part of this process consider if the original objectives continue to meet the needs of the partnership and partner organisations.	
9.11	Is there an annual review of the purpose of the partnership that includes consideration of the need for partnership to continue?	
10	**Termination of the Partnership**	
10.1	How will the partnership be brought to an end?	
10.2	Will any partner have the right to withdraw from the partnership?	
10.3	If so, on what terms and what will be the effect upon the partnership?	
10.4	What mechanisms will be used to value and realise assets and determine liabilities? If a surplus, how will the surplus be shared between partners? If a shortfall, how will the shortfall be met by the partners?	

Partnering Contract Checklist

Name of Partnering Contract:	
Partners:	
Commencement date and intended duration:	
Purpose of partnership:	

	Control	**Commentary** Refer to supporting documentation
1	**Council Aims and Objectives**	
1.1	How are the Council's objectives for the contract communicated to the contractor?	
2	**Contractual arrangements**	
2.1	Is the contract clear and understandable?	
2.2	Are the responsibilities of both parties set our clearly (e.g. who does what, when and where and who pays what and when)?	
2.3	Is duration of contract clear? Can it be extended and, if so, under what terms?	
2.4	Are relevant work-force issues included where these are lawful?	
2.5	Are there any requirements about consulting customers/public?	
2.6	Is a break clause relevant (i.e. where either party wishes to end the contractual relationship)?	
2.7	What are the liaison arrangements between Council and Contractor?	
2.8	What role does contractor play in helping local population at times of adversity (e.g. gritting, snow clearing, flooding) and what role has contractor in civil emergencies?	
2.9	How can things be changed (e.g. changes to work carried out)?	
2.10	Does the contract fully set out all restrictions relating to service delivery (e.g. hours of work, advertising restrictions, sub contracting)?	
2.12	Have all requirements of Contracts Procedure Rules been complied with (including tendering procedure, liquidated damages, cancellation for impropriety, EU Procurement Regulations and form of contract)?	

Partnering Contract Checklist

	Control	Commentary Refer to supporting documentation
	Contractual arrangements (continued)	
2.13	What happens if contract cannot be delivered due to some outside factor (e.g. inclement weather, national shortage of critical materials, strike)?	
2.14	What happens if things go wrong (e.g. withholding payments, damages, termination)? Does this also cover the issue of problems with innovative service delivery?	
2.15	Is the issue of who provides material, equipment, depot and labour fully addressed?	
2.16	Does the contract state that this is not a 'partnership'? (The creation of a partnership gives rise to some complex liabilities/responsibilities between the partners). The Council's Head of Legal Services should be consulted on this point.	
3	**Financial Responsibilities**	
3.1	Is the payment procedure clear?	
3.2	Is VAT and all other taxes (including employment-related taxes) properly dealt with?	
3.3	How is cost inflation dealt with?	
4	**Legal Responsibilities**	
4.1	How will disputes be settled (e.g. mediation, adjudication, arbitration, courts)?	
4.2	Have the following issues been considered i) Confidentiality? ii) Disability Discrimination Act? iii) Human Rights Act? iv) Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act? v) Environmental legislation? vi) Employment law (including TUPE)? vii) Data Protection Act/ viii) Freedom of Information Act?	
5	**Insurance**	
5.1	Insurances – this needs to be fully covered.	

Partnering Contract Checklist

	Control	Commentary Refer to supporting documentation
6	**Health and Safety**	
6.1	Health and Safety – is this properly covered?	
6.2	Have all potential risk liabilities been fully considered?	
6.3	Has all necessary information been provided to contractor, including information about all potential hazards?	
7	**Staffing Responsibilities**	
7.1	Are relevant and necessary quality systems, minimum qualifications/experience of staff and collection of service delivery data all covered?	
8	**Monitoring Service Delivery**	
9.1	Are service delivery standards and targets clear?	
9.2	Are innovations encouraged (e.g. innovative ways of delivering a service) and what happens to any resulting cost saving?	
9.3	What arrangements are in place to monitor and report service delivery?	

Partnership Assessment Tool

Effective Partnerships

Effective partnerships can make all the difference but can be time and resource intensive, and without a clear focus resources can be spread too thinly and their impact dissipated. Government exceptions are high and there needs to be a continuing drive for efficiency and effectiveness in partnership working

The key features of a successful partnership are:

Action Focused

- Shared values and agreed long-term vision of what it wants to achieve

- Effective use of input and feedback from local community and businesses

- Makes a positive impact, adding value and ensuring it is not working in isolation

Efficient organisation

- Structure is conducive to decision-making with members reflecting the views of the organisations they represent

- Resources matched to aims, objectives and plans

- Effective administrative support and communications

Inclusive Approach

- Membership reflects the purpose of the partnership

- Ensures that all partners have the capacity to be fully engaged in the partnership

- Works democratically with accountability to stakeholders and decisions open to scrutiny

Commitment to learn and develop

- Learns from best practice, stakeholders and consultations

- Makes use of a range of skills and expertise of partnership members

- Adapts to a changing environment

Effective performance management

- Process includes clear milestones, outcomes, performance indicators and delivery dates

- Partners deliver what they have signed up to and share information to support planning and management

- Partners resources used effectively to meet the aims of the partnership

How can the assessment tool help you?

Do you want to ensure that your partnerships:

✓ Are efficient and effective?

✓ Are action and outcome focused?

✓ Measure their progress effectively?

If so, then this assessment tool will provide a simple, quick and cost-effective way of assessing the effectiveness of partnership working. It enables a rapid appraisal (a quick 'health check') to be undertaken which identifies problem areas, and allows partners to focus on remedial action and resources proportionate to the seriousness and urgency of the problems.

It has been designed explicitly as a development tool and, as such, provides a practical way of:

✓ Helping newly formed partnerships to explore the views and aspirations of those embarking on a new venture. It provides a developmental framework for establishing a healthy and effective partnership by, amongst other things, highlighting what to avoid.

✓ Helping established partnerships take stock on a routine basis of how effective their process of partnership working is (i.e. provides an opportunity for a routine audit or health check)

✓ Helping partnerships which are experiencing difficulties to identify systematically areas of conflict (and consensus) and to move towards a remedial action plan. In such instances the value of the tool is diagnostic.

In particular the tool helps to:

✓ achieve partnerships that are outcome focused, effective and efficient

✓ demonstrate the value of partnerships to stakeholders and Government, for example, in the context of best value and comprehensive performance assessment

It will not, on its own, tell you how all the problems associated with partnership working should be addressed. **It does**, however, provide a common framework (and vocabulary) for partners to develop a jointly owned approach to tackling some of the barriers to effective partnership working.

Using the Tool

Partners will then need to become familiar with the material. This can be done by:

♦ bringing partners together to discuss the material and to complete the assessment exercise;

♦ partners reading the material and carrying out the exercise individually if they prefer or if it is difficult to bring partners together, or;

♦ through facilitation that helps to manage the process and encourages openness by the partners.

In completing the assessment exercise each partner will complete five assessment profile sheets aimed at assessing the partnership's performance against the following criteria:

- action focus
- efficiency
- inclusivity
- learning and development
- performance management

Each profile sheet contains a set of statements and you are asked to indicate your response. When completing your response it is important to bear in mind what lies behind each statement, and to help you the profile sheets set out 'Points to Consider' against each statement. You are also invited to summarise what are, in your opinion, the main strengths and weaknesses of the partnership and to suggest actions for improvement.

Making full use of the assessment process

The results of the self assessments and the key actions identified will be communicated to partners for discussion with a view to a plan being developed which identifies and agrees remedial action.

Through full and proactive use of the partnership evaluation process it is expected that it will have a wider application by, for example, assisting to:

- ✓ develop a database of information on partnerships
- ✓ identify and disseminate good practice
- ✓ benchmark partnership performance
- ✓ support decisions
- ✓ support the council's Best Value and Comprehensive Performance assessment processes.

Action Focus

How the partnership establishes common priorities and targets and agreed actions and milestones, leading to demonstrable improvements against measurable targets.

	No or don't know	Yes sometimes	Yes with room for improvement	Yes, real Benefits shown	Excellent	**Points to Consider** Consider whether the partnership:
1. Does the Partnership have a shared set of values and a clear, agreed long-term vision of what it wants to achieve?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• has a vision and priorities that relate to relevant national, regional, local and EU strategies and policies
2. Does it keep under review relevant needs, problems and opportunities using appropriate performance indicators?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• is forward-looking, focusing on opportunities as well as problems; future possibilities as well as past trends • uses an appropriate set of contextual indicators, has a clear understanding of where it started from and monitors change at agreed intervals • uses information well and avoids 'paralysis by analysis'
3. Does it make effective use of input from local businesses, the community and voluntary sector and public sector organisations?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• gets effective input and feedback from local business, public sector and community organisations • recognises that only a minority are members of representative organisations and reaches out to individual businesses, people and target groups • responds to the specific needs of individual sectors • always provides feedback on the results of consultations
4. Has the partnership established priorities and an action programme to achieve them with challenging targets and defined milestones?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• has challenging targets whilst recognising the time-lag that can occur between actions and successful outcomes • recognises that the success of the partnership may involve an element of risk and is prepared to try innovative approaches • has included 'quick wins' to show that it can deliver • recognises the extra effort and cost that is often needed to reach disadvantaged groups and areas
5. Does the partnership have a positive impact on the way services are delivered?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• is making an identifiable and measurable contribution using an agreed set of performance indicators and well chosen local indicators • achieves good customer satisfaction ratings • promotes and publicises its achievements effectively • demonstrates that its activities add up to more than the sum of the individual parts • relates its work to other organisations and partnerships and avoids duplication of effort

Action Focus

Summarise the main strengths and weaknesses of the partnerships and suggest follow up actions to improve the partnership in the spaces below

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✓ **Things we do well**
(Please specify)

✘ **What things we could do better**
(Please specify)

✓ **Recent improvements we have made**
(Please specify)

✘ **What things we should start doing**
(Please specify)

✓ **Our innovative approaches**
(Please specify)

✘ **What things we should stop doing**
(Please specify)

Additional comments arising from questions
(Please specify)

Efficiency

How the partnership achieves effective organisation and support and ensures resources are used as productively as possible.

	No or don't know	Yes sometimes	Yes with room for improvement	Yes, real Benefits shown	Excellent	**Points to Consider** Consider whether the partnership:
1. Is the partnership structure conducive to decision making?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• has a lead body that gives pro-active and effective leadership • has an effective chair • has a structure that is 'fit for purpose' with management arrangements that promote effective decision-making whilst at the same time having broader partnership arrangements that encourage wider involvement • makes use of 'task groups' to tackle key issues
2. Do partnership members reflect the views of the organisations they represent?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• has members that are able to make decisions and commit the organisations they represent to relevant partnership issues
3. Is the administrative organisation and support effective?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• has effective arrangements for organising meetings • has effective arrangements for communication between meetings
4. Are there sufficient financial and staff resources to enable the partnership to meet its aims and objectives?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• is receiving appropriate resource contributions from individual partners • is successful in identifying and levering in external resources through grant aid, sponsorship etc • has access to a sufficient range of specialist staff and relevant skills and expertise
5. Has consideration been given to the lifespan of the partnership and whether it should continue? Is this reviewed regularly?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• reviews and challenges, on a regular basis, what it does and why it does it; the need for its continuing existence and the activities it carries out • has a plan for managing change in the way it works • has developed an exit strategy, if it is time-limited

Efficiency

Summarise the main strengths and weaknesses of the partnerships and suggest follow up actions to improve the partnership in the spaces below

☑ **Things we do well**
(Please specify)

☒ **What things we could do better**
(Please specify)

☑ **Recent improvements we have made**
(Please specify)

☒ **What things we should start doing**
(Please specify)

☑ **Our innovative approaches**
(Please specify)

☒ **What things we should stop doing**
(Please specify)

Additional comments arising from questions
(Please specify)

Inclusivity

How the partnership actively involves all the key players - public, private, community and voluntary sectors and service users including, businesses, business organisations, employees, unemployed etc

	No or don't know	Yes sometimes	Yes with room for improvement	Yes, real Benefits shown	Excellent	**Points to Consider** Consider whether the partnership:
1. Does the partnership ensure that its membership reflects the purpose of the partnership?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• involves the key players relevant to its area of activity as members (e.g. the Council, Police, business organisations, ethnic, community and voluntary group, university and colleges etc) • takes a dynamic approach to membership and does not regard its current membership as set in stone
2. Does the partnership ensure that all partners have the capacity to be fully engaged in the partnership?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• invests time and effort in building the capacity of the business, community and voluntary sectors to participate fully in its work • has effective mechanisms to encourage involvement and generate enthusiasm and ideas e.g. focus groups, away days, visits etc
3. Does the partnership ensure effective input from service users (e.g. businesses, unemployed etc.) into its work and does it try to reach non-users?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• achieves input from service users and intended beneficiaries (e.g. businesses, social enterprises and the unemployed) • attempts to reach and understand the needs of potential users of services provided
4. Does the partnership work democratically and is it accountable to stakeholders?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• is managed and chaired so as to be able to provide an inclusive and impartial overview • ensures its decisions are open to scrutiny e.g. through public meetings, minutes recorded and being made available publicly • provides information on its activities and feedback on consultations
5. Does the partnership reach out and address the needs of disadvantaged areas and groups?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• involves the wider community of local businesses and people using an appropriate range of techniques including user satisfaction and opinion surveys, public meetings, business forums, focus groups, consultation documents • takes active steps to reach and address the needs of disadvantaged neighbourhoods and groups including an assessment of any differential impact in rural areas

Inclusivity

Summarise the main strengths and weaknesses of the partnerships and suggest follow up actions to improve the partnership in the spaces below

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✔ **Things we do well**
(Please specify)

✘ **What things we could do better**
(Please specify)

✔ **Recent improvements we have made**
(Please specify)

✘ **What things we should start doing**
(Please specify)

✔ **Our innovative approaches**
(Please specify)

✘ **What things we should stop doing**
(Please specify)

Additional comments arising from questions
(Please specify)

Learning and Development

How the partnership builds on best practice from other partnerships and encourages learning and development across all sectors of and partners.

	No or don't know	Yes sometimes	Yes with room for improvement	Yes, real Benefits shown	Excellent	**Points to Consider** Consider whether the partnership:
1. Does the partnership learn from and disseminate best practice?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• makes use of specialist sources and networks such as IDeA knowledge, Regen.net - the regeneration network, Audit commission, Ruralnet - the UK rural development network, Neighbourhood Renewal unit • takes active steps to learn from elsewhere - from Beacons, different sectors and other areas, including developing links with other partnerships - locally, regionally and nationally, to share experience and best practice • actively disseminates knowledge and best practice e.g. having a dedicated sub-group, partners reporting on conferences and seminars attended, producing best practice notes etc • can demonstrate making use of best practice to develop its processes and actions and adapt to change
2. Is appropriate use made of the wide range of skills and expertise of partnership members?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• understands the full breadth of the partnerships activities and its links with other partnerships and service areas • learns from and makes use of all appropriate partner experience and skills • has a commitment to developing partner skills and knowledge
3. Does the partnership learn from stakeholders and consultations, and apply this to service development?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• has a systematic approach to reviewing its actions and approaches and takes time to learn what works, where and why, making use of an agreed set of performance indicators • uses input and feedback from consultations with stakeholders, businesses, local communities, target groups, service users and non-users to inform and drive improvement
4. Does the partnership find out why members leave or fail to engage with the partnership and learn lessons for the future?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• has a systematic approach to identifying and evaluating the circumstances when members leave or fail to engage fully and takes the necessary steps to address issues that arise
5. Is the partnership able to adapt to a changing environment?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• has a flexible approach, changing course when needed to reflect changing needs, problems and opportunities, changes in national, regional and local strategies and priorities and changes in the organisational context including the development of other partnerships.

Learning and Development

Summarise the main strengths and weaknesses of the partnerships and suggest follow up actions to improve the partnership in the spaces below

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✓ **Things we do well**
(Please specify)

✗ **What things we could do better**
(Please specify)

✓ **Recent improvements we have made**
(Please specify)

✗ **What things we should start doing**
(Please specify)

✓ **Our innovative approaches**
(Please specify)

✗ **What things we should stop doing**
(Please specify)

Additional comments arising from questions
(Please specify)

Performance Management

How the partnership manages its performance in relation to its aims and objectives

	No or don't know	Yes sometimes	Yes with room for improvement	Yes, real Benefits shown	Excellent	**Points to Consider** Consider whether the partnership:
1. Does the performance management process include clear milestones, outcomes, performance indicators and delivery dates?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• has a systematic approach to performance management that all partners have signed up to • has a clear focus on delivering outcomes, with an agreed approach to their measurement that is consistent and reliable • has an agreed set of performance indicators and agreed definitions for their use and measurement e.g. what constitutes a job created or safeguarded (For more details visit: www.audit-commission.gov.uk) • has an agreed approach and protocol regarding individual partners wishing to claim an identifiable share of partnership achievements • self-critically compares and benchmarks its performance and activities with other relevant partnerships to identify significant differences, their causes and whether improvements are required • uses comparison and benchmarking as a key input to planning and driving improvements
2. Is the financial position monitored and reported regularly to the partnership?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• has appointed an accountable body, if appropriate, to be responsible for its finances with an agreed process for regular monitoring and reporting • has an agreed accounting process making use of CIPFA's Best Value Accounting Code of Practice
3. Do partners deliver what they have signed up to?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• has a clear understanding of what individual partners have agreed to do on the partnership's behalf • has a process for monitoring and reporting on particular inputs and outputs
4. Are partners' resources used effectively to meet the aims of the partnership?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• can demonstrate overall cost-effectiveness, whilst recognising the extra costs of delivering services to some areas and disadvantaged groups • has an agreed systematic approach to measuring the cost of partner inputs based on the 'total cost' principle of the Best value Accounting Code of Practice (For more details visit: www.cipfa.org • recognises the reliability limitations of apportioning costs to individual partnership activities
5. Do partners share information to support planning and management?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	• has developed a common approach to collecting, analysing and sharing information between partners with agreed data definitions

Performance Management

Summarise the main strengths and weaknesses of the partnerships and suggest follow up actions to improve the partnership in the spaces below

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☑ **Things we do well**
(Please specify)

☒ **What things we could do better**
(Please specify)

☑ **Recent improvements we have made**
(Please specify)

☒ **What things we should start doing**
(Please specify)

☑ **Our innovative approaches**
(Please specify)

☒ **What things we should stop doing**
(Please specify)

Additional comments arising from questions
(Please specify)