

PROTOCOL FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY PARTNERSHIP WORKING**Report of Executive Director of Commercial and Corporate Services****1. Introduction**

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of a Partnership Behaviour Protocol which has been developed by Standards for England.

2. Partnership Working

Partnership working between local authorities and other agencies is now integral to the future of policy development and service delivery for the public sector. At a national level the Government is increasingly promoting joint working/shared services and over recent years there has been an increase in the use of partnerships to deliver the Council's core business and contribute to the achievement of the City's priorities. Standards for England has recognised the increasingly important aspect of partnerships to public service delivery and the importance of good governance of partnership arrangements to enable an authority to operate more effectively and to manage risk.

Partners who are not members of an authority are not subject to the same rules governing their behaviour as elected or co-opted Members of an authority and therefore to help address this, Standards for England has developed a Partnership Behaviour Protocol, which is set out in the Appendix to this report.

3. Partnership Behaviour Protocol

The protocol is consistent with the CIPFA Solace (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy / Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) Good Governance Framework and the general principles for the conduct of people in public life which are set out in the Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001 and reflected in Part 5 of the Council's constitution.

Standards for England states that the protocol aims to:

- embed high ethical standards and partnership working
- address the disparity of rules and scrutiny governing those involved in local decision making
- enable partners to agree what behaviour they can expect from each other
- help partners hold each other to account and encourage constructive challenge between partners

- help partners to exercise leadership by demonstrating their own high standards of behaviour to other partners and to the public
- promote trust amongst the general public, demonstrating the partners' commitment to behaviour of a certain standard
- improve performance management

It is suggested that the Protocol could be used to assess the compatibility of partners by asking them to sign up to some common values and behaviours and could also be used as part of a tendering process, under which potential partners could be asked if they would be willing to sign up to and provide evidence of the values specified. The Protocol can be adapted, as appropriate, to fit local circumstances.

The Council has already recognised the importance of partnerships and the need for good governance arrangements and has developed a code of practice for partnerships. This detailed document, which is published on the Council's intranet, gives guidance and advice on a wide range of matters including the drivers and incentives for partnerships, the challenges, assessing the need for a partnership, finance, human resources, information governance, equalities and diversity and risk management. Whilst the Code of Practice already makes reference to the importance of issues of culture, relationship and values, it is considered that the Protocol and the principles contained therein produced by Standards for England would form a valuable supplement to the Code.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Partnership Behaviour Protocol be commended to the Council as a supplement to the Council's Code of Practice on Partnerships and that as part of the process of inviting tenders and/or developing future partnership arrangements, in each case consideration is given to the option of incorporation of the protocol, adapted as appropriate, to fit the circumstances.

Partnership behaviour protocol

Achieve intended outcomes

Our priorities are evidence based and our decision making is transparent.

We will:

- Share resources to achieve joint outcomes
- Monitor how well we have used our resources
- Actively encourage ideas and innovation
- Ensure that decision making is transparent
- Be committed to continuous improvement
- Ensure that claims of improved performance are based on clear evidence
- Establish accountability both across the partnership (horizontally) and within each organisation (vertically)

Public interest

We act in the interest of the public and demonstrate value.

We will:

- Focus on long term as well as short term issues
- Act in the interests of the public good over individual interests
- Demonstrate to the community how we are achieving publicly valued outcomes
- Agree a protocol for the handling of complaints that relates to our joint work

Building partners' capacity

We build capacity in our partnership.

We will:

- Be committed to developing individual partners' skills to achieve our aims
- Encourage partners to be confident working outside of their organisational culture
- Be open to partners' suggestions and help

Value and respect each other

We respect and value everyone's contribution.

We will:

- Ensure that all partners contribute appropriately and openly
- Acknowledge the capabilities of all members
- Recognise and embrace the role of voluntary and community sector partners
- Avoid dominance by one or two individuals
- Respect each other's roles and needs
- Actively encourage the participation of all partnership members
- Build effective working relationships with each other
- Recognise the value of all partners' contributions

Act ethically

We act ethically. We are open and objective and encourage constructive challenge.

We will:

- Agree a mechanism for whistleblowing and dealing with complaints
- Ensure whistleblowers are supported
- Actively promote a 'no-blame' culture
- Support partners to both understand and constructively challenge any poor behaviour
- Use appropriate, unambiguous and simple language
- Agree how we will achieve democratic accountability
- Ensure that our dialogue is open and transparent
- Declare conflicts of interest and address them
- Make sure that the purpose of all meetings is made clear
- Be honest and objective

Aligning strategies and networks

We harness our collective efforts through joint planning, delivery and governance arrangements.

We will:

- Ensure that partners can influence the decision making of member organisations
- Allow sufficient time and capacity to be given to understand an issue and to reflect on its impact
- Make sure that actions taken by the partnership are clear, time-limited and task-orientated
- Encourage all partners to actively shape the strategy
- Ensure that agreed actions are carried out