

Partnership Toolkit

Foreword

Partnership working is essential to the effective delivery of services in South Cambridgeshire and assists the Council in meeting its objectives by adding value to the work we do. Councillors and staff belong to various strategic and operational partnerships and task and finish groups plus many more that steer projects, provide networking opportunities or promote best practice.

As well as offering many benefits partnership working can also present risks. The council needs to be confident that its partnership arrangements are sufficiently rigorous to achieve the Council's objectives in an efficient and transparent way. This toolkit has been put in place to help us govern these working relationships and effectively manage potential risks.

The toolkit covers the eight standards agreed by the Corporate Governance Committee on the 9th April 2008 as well as information about good governance and the Cambridgeshire Compact. It also reflects the recommendations of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee of 1 April 2010. The good practice checklist enables both officers and elected members to assess the health of the partnership they are involved with and highlight where action may be required.

Councillor Ray Manning
Leader of the Council

Jean Hunter
Chief Executive

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Purpose of the toolkit

The toolkit outlines the approach to be applied when considering joining or introducing new partnerships and also reviewing existing arrangements. It provides a basis for examining the key issues that require consideration to ensure that any potential problems identified in relation to partnership working are confronted, assessed, overcome and avoided in the future.

The main objective is to ensure that the Council participates in successful partnerships that have robust governance arrangements. The Council's eight partnership standards are:

1. Partnerships should have **clear objectives** that are realistic and measurable and link to the achievement of the Council's corporate objectives.
2. There should be **clear organisational and staffing arrangements** in place, with clear accountabilities for those involved in the partnership and clarity with regard to the resources committed to it.
3. Partnerships should have **robust management and appropriate decision making** mechanisms in place. They should have a constitution and/or terms of reference and defined standards as to the way individuals within partnerships should behave.
4. Partnerships should have **robust performance management** arrangements for monitoring and reviewing how successfully targets are being met and sharing review findings amongst partners.
5. Partnerships should have **robust financial arrangements** in place, with clear budget setting and monitoring procedures and clear financial regulations and schemes of delegation.
6. Partnerships should have a clear process for identifying, prioritising and **managing risks**. Business continuity arrangements should also be in place.
7. Partnerships should have a transparent process for **information sharing** within the partnership **and public engagement arrangements** where there is communication with service users and the wider public.
8. Partnerships should have clear **exit arrangements** that allow for minimal disruption and the reallocation of resources.

Both employees and elected members of the Council are expected to use the toolkit for both new and existing partnerships, including task and finish groups.

Good Governance

“Good governance strengthens credibility and confidence in our public services. The function of governance is to ensure that authorities, other local government organisations or connected partnerships fulfil their purpose and achieve their intended outcomes for citizens and service users and operate in an effective, efficient, economic and ethical manner.”

Good Governance in Local Government, CIPFA

The six principles of good governance in partnerships are:

- (i) Focussing on the purpose of the partnership and on outcomes for the community including citizens and service users and creating and implementing a vision for the local area;
- (ii) Working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;
- (iii) Promoting the values of the partnership and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour;
- (iv) Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk;
- (v) Developing the capacity and capability of the partnership to be effective;
- (vi) Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust local public accountability.

Governance arrangements should be proportionate to the risks involved.

Compact

Elected members and officers involved with partnerships should be aware of the Compact and its content. The Compact has been designed to improve relationships between statutory bodies and the voluntary and community sector. It provides a framework for what each sector can expect from the other.

The Compact states that statutory organisations will:

- Develop a long-term policy and strategy for support and investment in Voluntary and Community Sector activity locally, including Compact compliance.
- Work towards a situation in which statutory contracts and service agreements are a minimum of three years duration and where a minimum of 12 weeks notice is given in respect of decisions to change or terminate grant or contract conditions (or less by mutual agreement).
- Undertake appropriate consultation with the voluntary sector to ensure that as commissioners we are working towards consistency in commissioning, funding and monitoring practice.
- Provide for quality in consulting the voluntary and community sector and others, including providing for a 12 weeks minimum consultation period wherever possible.
- Recognise that VCS organisations have the right and duty to determine and manage their own affairs in the best interests of the constituencies and beneficiaries.
- Recognise the entitlement of voluntary and community groups to campaign within the law in order to advance their aims and objectives, and to comment on and challenge public sector policy, irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist.
- Recognise the breadth of knowledge and ideas within the Voluntary and Community Sector and agree to value and utilise these resources when developing policy, strategy and service delivery.

The full version of the Compact can be found at
<http://www.scams.gov.uk/CommunityandLiving/Partnerships/compact.htm>

For further information on the Compact please contact [Kathryn Hawkes](#), Partnerships Officer.

Good Practice Checklist

This good practice checklist will help you to assess the health of your partnership. All of the answers should be 'yes' and action, using the guidance in the relevant section of this toolkit, should be taken where this is not the case.

1. Clear Objectives

	Y	N
Are there agreed aims and objectives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the aims and objectives relate to those of the council?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a clear published strategy for the partnership (or its parent partnership)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a shared action plan to deliver the strategy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Clear organisational and staffing arrangements

	Y	N
Was the correct approval sought to initiate the partnership?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are roles and responsibilities clearly defined?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there clarity about the functions and decisions that can be delegated and to whom?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there arrangements in place for the external scrutiny of partnership decisions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do staff employed by the partnership have agreed aims and objectives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a policy on recruitment to the partnership? Is it clear whose recruitment procedures should be used?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are staff supervision arrangements clear and appropriate for partnership staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have staff development procedures (appraisal, training) been clarified for partnership staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is it clear how staff conduct issues will be addressed between partners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has staffing been fully costed and is it clear who will decide and be liable for costs where contract terms require amending?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Robust management and appropriate decision making

	Y	N
Does the partnership have terms of reference or a constitution?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a code of conduct for representatives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are clear and accurate minutes recorded and publicised where confidentiality permits?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a declaration of interest procedure?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Robust performance management

	Y	N
Is there an agreed performance management framework?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are challenging targets set year on year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is performance against targets tracked and reported to the partnership?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are performance measures in place for the council to monitor its involvement in the partnership?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Robust financial arrangements

	Y	N
Is it clear where accountability lies for financial matters?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the council's financial commitment clearly identified in departmental budgets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is it clear whose standing orders/financial regulations/constitution are to be used?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the process for approving spending clear, documented and agreed by the partnership?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are financial monitoring and reporting arrangements in place within the partnership and who manages them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where necessary, are financial monitoring arrangements in place within the council in relation to the partnership?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Is there a means to evidence that objectives are being met in a cost effective manner?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the procedure for applying for grants and external funding clear?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where resources are jointly purchased or commissioned, is there clarity over ownership, responsibilities etc?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the implications of VAT and other taxation requirements of, and differences between, different organisations been considered?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Management of risks

	Y	N
Does the partnership identify the risks related to it being successful in delivering its objectives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the partnership have a means by which to reduce any risks identified?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Information sharing and public engagement arrangements

	Y	N
Are local people, including children and young people, adequately and robustly consulted whenever designing or evaluating services that are wholly or partly aimed at them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is an information sharing protocol in place between partners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have data protection issues been addressed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there clarity on confidentiality within meetings and on handling confidential information between partners?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the partnership publicly report its progress?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the partnerships papers available to the public? (confidentiality permitting)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can the public ask questions at meetings or raise agenda items? (confidentiality permitting)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a complaints and feedback process in place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Exit arrangements

	Y	N
Does the partnership have an exit strategy in place?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where appropriate, have staffing issues been considered in the partnerships exit planning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the exit strategy include a policy on dealing with ongoing income and expenditure?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is it clear who will own assets once the partnership comes to an end?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. Clear objectives

One of the main reasons that partnerships fail is the lack of clear objectives and plans.

The Council believes that all partnerships it is involved with should have:

- A business plan or strategy in place.
- Realistic and measurable objectives.
- Targeted outputs and outcomes.
- A clear link to the achievement of the Council's corporate objectives.

There should be clear aims and realistic and measurable objectives before a partnership is set up and these should be agreed by the partnership at the first meeting. The aims and objectives should answer the question '*what is it intended to achieve?*' and should have a clear link to the achievement of the Council's corporate objectives.

The aims and objectives should be set out in the partnership's terms of reference or constitution and the short/medium/long-term outcomes and performance measures in a business plan or strategy.

Objectives

Objectives are specific statements that can be measured. For this to take place they should be SMART, which means they are:

Specific	-	all objectives should have specific outcomes
Measurable	-	the outcome of an objective should be able to be measured
Achievable	-	the objective should describe something that can be achieved within the timescale and resources set for the project
Realistic	-	objectives should describe something that can actually be done
Timebound	-	a timescale should be set for when the objective is to be achieved

Outputs, inputs and outcomes

Once the aims and objectives have been set, partners should turn the objectives into specific outcomes. The outcomes should answer the question '*how will I know when these objectives have been achieved, in terms of benefits experienced by the community?*'

Each of the partnership's outcomes should be able to be measured or monitored. This can be achieved by setting specific performance measures or milestones. Performance measures can be quantitative or qualitative. Quantitative measures use statistical information whereas qualitative measures provide an understanding of people's experiences, perspectives and histories in the context of their personal circumstances or settings and answer 'what is', 'how' and 'why' questions.

Outputs should relate to the outcome and are the activities that will need to take place for the objectives to be met. They are usually things that need to be done in order to produce the desired result e.g. carry out an awareness campaign or increase the number of neighbourhood watch schemes in an area.

Inputs are the resources that are available to carry out the work needed in order to achieve the objectives. The inputs or resources used to produce the outputs can be financial, material or human.

For further information on this section please contact [Richard May](#), Policy and Performance Manager.

2. Clear organisational and staffing arrangements

The Council believes that all partnerships it is involved with should have:

- Clear accountabilities e.g. role of lead officer, elected members, Scrutiny and Overview.
- Clarity around resources committed to the partnership.

Your Role as Lead Officer or Elected Member

Firstly, it is very important that you are clear about your role on the partnership/s that you are involved with. Where you are the Council's lead officer or elected members for a partnership, you are expected to:

- Be the main point of contact between the Council and the partnership.
- Attend all meetings or arrange for an appropriate well-briefed substitute to attend on your behalf to ensure maximum input, influence and benefit.
- Actively participate in the work of the partnership.
- Influence the partnership's agenda to facilitate the successful delivery of relevant Council priorities.
- Review performance against agreed outcome targets and highlight any issues with your Corporate Manager.
- Communicate issues and actions to relevant Council officers and elected members.
- Ensure there is a regular self-assessment of the partnership's activity and contribute to the implementation of appropriate corrective actions.
- Be clear as to the level of decision-making authority that the partnership has and whether or not you have such authority from the Council.
- Create an effective mechanism for briefing and de-briefing relevant officers and elected members.

Elected members representing the Council on partnerships identified as significant to the authority are additionally required to provide updates to all elected members.

You also need to be clear about the amount of time you are expected to commit to the partnership and ensure that your manager is agreeable to this level of commitment. Your commitment should not exceed the amount of added value that the partnership can deliver.

Scrutiny and Overview

The scrutiny and overview committee has the ability to challenge the performance of partnerships on behalf of the residents of South Cambridgeshire. This challenge helps partnerships to demonstrate openness and accountability.

Some partner organisations may have no statutory obligation to cooperate, or they may be subject to scrutiny and overview through other bodies. It is therefore important that scrutiny and overview work is undertaken sensitively and in a spirit of a constructive and mutual search for service improvement.

When identifying issues for scrutiny or overview the following should be considered:

1. **Public Interest:** the concerns of local people should influence the issues chosen
2. **Ability to change:** priority should be given to issues can realistically be influenced
3. **Performance:** priority should be given to the areas exhibiting under-performance
4. **Extent:** priority should be given to issues that are relevant to all or large parts of the District
5. **Replication:** it is important to avoid duplication or wasted effort
6. **Strategic aims:** priority should be given to issues which have implications for the Council's objectives and priorities.

Hosting Partnership Staff

There are plenty of issues to weigh up when contemplating hosting partnership staff. At a minimum, the following should be considered:

- Will the post be permanent and subject to redundancy proceedings should funding be discontinued? If so, who will be liable?
- Who will be liable for paying hidden costs such as maternity or paternity benefits if this becomes necessary?
- If conduct issues arise, who will need to be made aware?
- How will sickness be covered?
- Will the Council's Performance and Development Review procedure be used to set objectives, monitor performance and agree training needs?

You must seek approval from the Chief Executive prior to agreeing to host a partnership post.

For further information on this section please contact your Corporate Manager.

3. Robust management and appropriate decision making

All partnerships, including task and finish groups, should have a governing document such as a constitution or terms of reference and operating conventions. The process of agreeing a document is in itself an important element of partnership governance; it will help clarify roles and relationships and build goodwill and trust.

The Council believes that all partnerships it is involved with should have:

- A constitutional or legal framework, which can include terms of reference.
- Clear codes of conduct.
- A clear decision making process.

Whilst there is no single form of document that will suit the size and scope of all partnerships, the main elements that should be considered are:

- Name of the partnership;
- Aims and objectives;
- Timescales (date of establishment, review and end (see exit arrangements));
- Membership, including status of different members and termination of membership, schemes of delegation;
- Powers (statutory responsibilities and decision-making authority);
- Accountability (reporting structures, dealing with complaints and public transparency);
- Roles and responsibilities of the Chairperson and other members, including codes of conduct, principles (e.g. the seven principles of public life for all who serve the public in any way¹) and equalities;
- Income and other resource contributions, including ownership of assets;
- Meetings (frequency, quorum rules, chairing and voting);
- Decision-making processes (scope and timescales);
- Performance management arrangements;
- Risk management arrangements;
- Amendments to the partnership's rules;
- Minutes; and
- Exit strategy.

Governing documents should be reviewed at least every two years and amended where necessary. The discussion should include consideration of whether the partnership continues to be necessary. Partnerships should be disbanded if they have lost their focus or achieved their purpose.

Regular consideration should be given to the frequency of partnerships meetings, especially strategic partnerships. It may not be necessary to meet as regularly once processes are embedded, actions are being taken forward and risks are being managed.

Task and finish groups should be considered instead of ongoing operational partnerships. This is to ensure there is a continued focus and that partnerships are not meeting just because they always have.

For further information on this section please contact [Fiona McMillan](#), Principal Solicitor.

¹ <http://www.public-standards.gov.uk/>

4. Robust performance management

The Council believes that all partnerships it is involved with should have:

- Clear milestones, outcomes, performance indicators and delivery dates.
- Arrangements for monitoring and reviewing how successfully targets are being met.
- Arrangements for ensuring that monitoring and review findings are shared and disseminated amongst the partners.
- A clear process for addressing poor performance within the partnership.

For information on milestones and outcomes please look at section one 'clear objectives'. The aims and objectives should be set out in the partnership's terms of reference or constitution and the short/medium/long-term outcomes and performance measures in a business plan or strategy.

All partnerships should have robust performance management arrangements in place. Partnerships with a more formal workload, more onerous responsibilities and larger resources should have more sophisticated arrangements in place. Where possible, management arrangements should be aligned with the Council's own performance management arrangements and the CorVu system.

Partnerships should regularly monitor and evaluate their performance and provide updates at partnership meetings. If a partnership is not meeting its targets, or is likely to fail in the future, this will need to be flagged via the partnership's agreed reporting structures and should also be discussed with your Corporate Manager.

Partnerships should also consider carrying out regular self-assessments to maximise their potential and deliver better outcomes.

For further information on this section please contact [Richard May](#), Policy and Performance Manager.

5. Robust financial arrangements

There is a range of financial issues to consider when setting up a partnership and a number of them are covered below. This section sets out a number of important points, but if in doubt please seek advice.

The Council believes that all partnerships it is involved with should have:

- Clarity on resource committed to the partnership.
- Clear budget setting and monitoring procedures in place.
- A budget and performance reporting framework in place.
- Clear financial administration procedures in the form of financial regulations and scheme of delegation.

Resources

Every partnership needs to be clear about the resources it has available. Resources can be in the form of people, other in kind contributions and/or money. If partners are committing funds to the partnership, clear agreements need to be in place setting out how much funding will be provided and how under and over spends will be dealt with.

Budgeting

Budgeting is a fundamental part of the planning process for any organisation or partnership. It links what resources are at your disposal with how you are going to use them to achieve your objectives and each year a budget plan should be approved. Where a partnership has monetary resources at its disposal it should agree monitoring procedures that are appropriate to the level of funding it receives.

Reporting framework

Where a partnership is in receipt of monetary resources, the accountable body for the funding should provide the partners with regular budget control reports, to enable the partners to understand what the financial position is. A named person should be given this responsibility. The reporting framework needs to link to the agreement on how under and over spends within the partnership would be dealt with if they happened.

The accountable body may change depending on where the funding originates. The partnership must abide by the accountable body's financial regulations and must ensure that it has obtained the appropriate level of authorisation before payments are made.

The budget reporting framework should be linked to the partnership's performance management framework to ensure that spend is linked to outcomes.

Audit requirements

From the outset, the partnership agreement must provide both internal and external auditors with rights of access to documentation. All partners must ensure there is a clear audit trail for any payments made, contracts tendered and funding received, which follows the appropriate financial / contract regulations and schemes of delegation.

Document retention

It will need to be established who is going to be responsible for holding documents and for that party to be aware of the legal requirements of retaining documents for various statutory and grant body requirement periods.

Grants

Grants may form the main funding for partnership arrangements and the terms and conditions of those grants must be clear, including who the accountable body is and document retention. Grant funded services or projects should have clear exit strategies for when the funding ends.

For further information on this section please contact [Alex Colyer](#), Executive Director – Corporate Services.

6. Management of risks

Risk management is a key element of corporate governance. It allows you to identify things that may go wrong and plan ways to either prevent them happening or minimise their impact. Each partnership needs to consider the risks that, if they occurred, would prevent it from achieving its objectives.

As partnerships carry out work to meet the Council's objectives, the Council itself faces a risk of partnership failure. The Council's lead officer for a partnership should therefore assess the risk of their partnership failing and - where this is a possibility - take action to put mitigating controls in place.

The Council believes that all partnerships with which it is involved should have:

- A clear process for identifying and recording risks, assessing the potential impact and likelihood of risks occurring, prioritising and managing risks.
- A common understanding of the identified risks among all partners in the partnership.
- A clear allocation of risks to nominated members of the partnership, including responsibility for overseeing the implementation of action plans to mitigate risks.
- Regular review of risks and action plans.
- Appropriate business continuity arrangements in place.

The Council's scoring mechanism for assessing the likelihood of a partnership failing, considers whether the following elements of risk management are in place: risk register, process for managing risk, mitigation plans, clear risk allocation and exit strategies:

- A score of 1 ("more work required") means that there is no process in place, risks are not understood or taken seriously.
- A score of 3 ("get by ... just") means that the partnership has taken an initial view, but it is not widely shared or regularly updated.
- A score of 5 ("as good as it gets") means that there is clear consensus between partners and a robust process updated regularly.

The Council encourages partnerships to use the standard SCDC risk register format set out in its Risk Management Strategy, however, the Council recognises that a partnership may choose to use another format appropriate to its needs. If a partnership chooses not to use the standard SCDC format, the lead officer should liaise with the Finance Project Officer to ensure that the suggested register/log is to an appropriate standard or for guidance on how to structure the partnership risk register/log.

The Council's own risk management processes are set out in its Risk Management Strategy, available on In-Site, the Council's intranet, together with:

- areas to consider regarding the scope of risk;
- guidelines for assessing the impact and likelihood of risk;
- advice for report writers; and
- templates for risk registers, prioritisation matrices and action plans.

Lead officers can use the Council's processes as a guide to ensuring that appropriate risk management arrangements are established in a partnership, proportionate to its significance and scope.

For further information on this section please contact [John Garnham](#), Finance Project Officer.

7. Information sharing and public engagement arrangements

The Council believes that all partnerships it is involved with should have:

- A clear and transparent process for sharing information within the partnership.
- A clear data quality trail.
- Communication and engagement with service users and the wider public to explain how the partnership works, where responsibility and accountability lie and to design or evaluate services that are wholly or partly aimed at them.
- A joint complaints procedure or process for ensuring redress can be obtained.

Information sharing

There are enormous benefits to sharing information, however, it should always be done within the law. The provisions in the Data Protection Act 1998 should be used as a safeguard to protect privacy and confidentiality and not be used to justify unnecessary barriers to sharing information. Various information sharing protocols exist across partner organisations in Cambridgeshire and it is important to abide by these where applicable.

Protocols seek to facilitate the professional and responsible exchange of information. They provide guidance on how officers can lawfully and fairly exchange personal, depersonalised and non-personal information and set out the principles that must be followed when exchanging information. If your partnership exchanges personal information to meet its aims you must ensure that a protocol is in place and that the guidance is followed.

The Information Commissioner's Office has developed a Framework Code of Practice for Sharing Personal Information, which can be found at www.ico.gov.uk/upload/documents/library/data_protection/detailed_specialist_guides/pinfo-framework.pdf

If you are unsure as to whether or not a protocol is necessary or would like advice regarding the development of a protocol please contact the Legal Team.

For further information on information sharing please contact [David Lord](#), Senior Lawyer.

Public engagement

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 introduced a new duty to involve. The duty is due to come into force on 1 April 2009 and requires local authorities to take those steps they consider appropriate to involve *representatives of local persons* in the exercise of any of their functions, where they consider that it is appropriate to do so.

The phrase "representatives of local persons" refers to a mix of "local persons", i.e. a selection of the individuals, groups or organisations the authority considers likely to be affected by, or have an interest in the authority function. In the context of the duty the "representative" does not refer to formally elected or nominated members of the community, such as councillors.

In considering how to fulfil the statutory duty, you should aim to involve representatives of local people as much as possible. This should be in relation to routine functions, as well as significant one-off decisions.

The following three ways of involving should be considered. You will need to consider whether one, two, all three or none of the approaches should be used.

- a) **providing information** about the exercise of the particular function;
- b) **consulting** about the exercise of the particular function; and/or

c) **involving in another way.**

The Council's **Community Engagement Toolkit** can help you to decide when and how to engage with people who live, work and/or visit the district, including children and young people.

In addition to complying with the duty to involve, all partnerships should have a **joint complaints procedure** or process for ensuring redress can be obtained. The procedure should be clear and accessible to both partners and the public. Partnerships need to recognise the feedback value of complaints; it should influence decisions about service delivery. Complaints also present an opportunity to engage with the wider public.

Partnerships need to take a collective approach to developing an effective complaints procedure; this means that they can deal with complaints collaboratively, or quickly and efficiently channel the complainant to the appropriate partner's corporate system.

For further information on public engagement please contact [Gemma Barron](#), Partnerships Manager.

8. Exit arrangements

The Council believes that all partnerships it is involved with should have:

- An exit strategy that allows for minimal disruption, smooth transition and no nasty surprises.
- Arrangements for the reallocation of resources.
- A process for managing residual liabilities.
- Assessed the impact of ending the partnership.

Recognising when a partnership is no longer necessary can be difficult, but is important. It is best to plan for the end of the partnership when the partnership is initially set up. Exit arrangements should be detailed within the partnership's governing document.

The partnership should set out in its governing document the conditions under which a partner may leave the partnership and the conditions under which the partnership can be brought to a close. When preparing the exit or end conditions you should consider the following:

- What should happen to any employees working on behalf of the partnership?
- What will happen to any assets (including monetary contribution) owned by the partnership?
- What will happen to any documentation, or information held by the partnership?
- How will a final report (including accounts) of the partnership be presented and to whom?
- Is there a need to consult with stakeholders before withdrawing from or ending the partnership?

Partnerships should carry out a regular review (preferably annually) of whether it should carry on or cease to function. Possible reasons for ceasing include:

- Inability to meet objectives
- Lack of funding
- Lack of commitment from a key partner
- Objectives are met
- The partnership activity no longer supports the Council's objectives
- One or more partners wish to exit for any of the above reasons.

Winding up a partnership that is a company is a specialist task and you will need to take advice from the Legal Team if this applies.

Exiting a partnership can be done at any time, barring any contractual commitments. If you are proposing to exit a partnership this should be discussed with partners and should follow any agreed exit arrangements that are in place. Withdrawal may have serious negative effects on partners and could undermine future relationships if not handled correctly.

The optimal time for a partnership to cease would be at the end of the financial year, as the partnership's plans and budgets likely will be synchronised to this. A withdrawal will need to be planned and it should be borne in mind that a period of notice is considered usual.

For further information on this section please contact [Fiona McMillan](#), Principal Solicitor.