

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Report to:	AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
Date:	15 March, 2016
Subject:	WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP – Role of the Committee in monitoring partnerships
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr Alwyn Rowlands, Portfolio Holder (Transformation, Performance, Corporate Plan and Human Resources)
Head of Service:	Annwen Morgan, Assistant Chief Executive
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Local Members:	Not Applicable

A - Recommendation/s and Reason/s	
1	<p><b>BACKGROUND / CONTEXT</b></p> <p>1.1 Working in partnership has become an integral part of Local Authorities' working practices and there is evidence that this has led to developing a relationship of trust and has enabled the development of robust frameworks to deliver tangible outcomes for our customers, citizens and communities. Whilst partnership working can bring significant benefits, can respond to complex challenges and provide flexibility, innovation and additional resources to service delivery, it is not easy and can carry significant risks (often associated with complexity and ambiguity) unless delivered within a robust governance framework;</p> <p>1.2 The 2014/15<sup>1</sup> Annual Governance Statement summarised our partnership governance arrangements as a <b>significant governance issue</b>:  <i>".... The Council does not have a formal Partnership Framework in place to provide assurance that all partnerships have adequate governance, management and performance arrangements in place to meet their stated objectives and that they provide value for money in relation to the Council's financial and other resources invested in them..."</i></p> <p>The Wales Audit Office concluded in the Corporate Assessment Report<sup>2</sup> that the Council plays a prominent role in collaboration and contributes well to partnership working. Collaboration and partnership working at all levels (local to international) is essential to enable the Council to achieve its ambitious investment and new job creation;</p> <p>1.3 A report was completed recently by the Internal Audit Unit on the governance arrangements of our partnership working<sup>3</sup> which provides a driver to progress some</p>

<sup>1</sup> Annual Governance Statement 2014/15 (dated May, 2015)

<sup>2</sup> Annual Improvement Report 2014/15 (incorporating the Corporate Assessment Report 2015), Wales Audit Office December, 2015

<sup>3</sup> Internal Audit Report : Partnerships – Governance Arrangements 003.15/16 (February, 2016)

key development areas. This will therefore enable the Council to further develop its corporate approach to partnerships (strategic and operational, internal and external). The audit report contained 6 recommendations which are summarised in paragraph 3 below.

## **2 ALIGNMENT WITH THE COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

**2.1** The Authority's improvement plans for the current term up to 2017 are detailed in our Corporate Plan<sup>4</sup> and the Transformation Plan<sup>5</sup>. One of the Council's main objectives is a commitment to developing partnerships in order to provide effective and efficient services of good quality that are highly valued;

**2.2** Our Self-Assessment<sup>6</sup> states that Partnership and collaboration are integral to how the Council strives to achieve its ambition and its transformation programme. For a Council of its size, it is an important way of building capacity and is fundamental to our approach to delivering on joint priorities. We believe that successful partnership working is essential in order to provide better services for our customers and a successful Anglesey. Increasingly, our success as a Council will be judged on the basis of how well we work with others to improve the well-being of our citizens.

Our transformation work over the past 2 years has enhanced our status within the local government family in Wales and we are now fully involved in partnership work within that framework.

## **3 THE SCOPE OF PARTNERSHIP WORK STREAMS**

Our partnership work streams cover the following elements:

**3.1** Develop a partnerships policy document [**policy**]

**3.2** Develop a partnerships toolkit that will provide guidelines for establishing and developing partnerships [**toolkit**]

**3.3** Compiling a central, corporate register of partnerships [**register**]

**3.4** Developing monitoring arrangements for partnerships in order to keep track of outcomes and financial matters [**monitoring and reporting on performance**]

**3.5** Establishing the role of the Audit and Governance Committee in relation to reviewing partnership governance arrangements including monitoring risk registers [**assurance and risk management**]

**3.6** Conduct an annual review of key partnerships [**annual review**].

## **4 POLICY DOCUMENT – WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP**

**4.1** The Council has extensive experience of working in partnership, be it on a local, regional or national level<sup>7</sup>.

**4.2** The policy document (**APPENDIX 1**)<sup>8</sup> summarizes the Council's vision for partnership working and focuses on partnerships where the Council chooses to work with other organisations in the private, public or voluntary sector. It does not address the links made through the procurement process. The policy supplements the individual partnership statements that already exist e.g. the Isle of Anglesey Compact (a partnership agreement with the Voluntary Sector), the Shared Community Charter with the Town and Community Councils on Anglesey.

<sup>4</sup> Isle of Anglesey County Council Corporate Plan 2013-2017

<sup>5</sup> Isle of Anglesey County Council Transformation Plan

<sup>6</sup> Isle of Anglesey County Council Self Assessment Report January, 2015

<sup>7</sup> Annual Improvement Report 2014/15 (includes Corporate Assessment Report 2015), WAO December 2015

<sup>8</sup> To be adopted by the Executive at its meeting of 14/03/16

## **5 ROLE OF THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

- 5.1** One of the partnership work-streams entails establishing a role for this Committee in reviewing partnership governance arrangements – this to include an overview of the risk registers relating to the significant key partnerships;
- 5.2** Paragraph 3.4.8.3 of the Council’s Constitution defines this Committee’s responsibility in reviewing the Authority’s risk management arrangements with paragraph 3.4.8.3.4 specifically noting:  
*“Review the risk profile of the Council and assurances that action is being taken on risk related issues, including those relating to significant partnerships.”*

The role of this Committee does not therefore include reviewing the contribution and outcomes of partnerships but rather ensuring that key partnerships adequately manage risk;

- 5.3** There will be risks for the Council and its services which are associated with partnership working and it is essential that Service Risk Registers and also the Corporate Risk Register consider and record those risks;
- 5.4** In addition, individual partnerships will also have their own risks. It is essential that the partnership governance arrangements indicate how any risks will be recorded and reported to the Council and also to other members of the partnership. Whilst the partnership toolkit will recommend that partnerships use the Council’s risk register format and scoring system, it is not possible to enforce this as other members of the partnership will have their own arrangements;
- 5.5 Next Steps:** the intention in moving forward will therefore be to follow the steps below:
- Identify the partnerships that are key to the Council;
  - Ensure that the risks to the Council which are associated with being in partnership are included in our service and corporate risk registers;
  - That an appropriate risk register exists for all the key partnerships;
  - Ensure that the significant risks and the management of them are reported to this Committee.

It is intended to report to this Committee on the risks to the Council of being in partnership and to do so as part of the current arrangements for reporting and managing risk. The current process includes one report on the risk process at the beginning of each year and two further reports during the year on the corporate risks. It is therefore proposed that the annual report should also include a section on the partnerships process and that a specific report on partnership risks be submitted to this Committee before the end of each financial year.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Audit and Governance Committee is requested to accept the:

- 6.1** Responsibility in relation to risk associated with the significant key partnerships;
- 6.2** Process and timeline for reporting to the Committee on the risk associated with the significant key partnerships.

**B - What other options did you consider and why did you reject them and / or opt for this option?**

Not Applicable.

**Q - Why is this a decision for the Executive?**

Not Applicable.

**CH – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?**

Yes.

**D – Is this this decision within the budget approved by the full Council?**

Unknown.

<b>DD - Who did you consult?</b>		<b>What did they say?</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Chief Executive / Senior Leadership Team</b> (Mandatory)	The Senior Leadership Team considered the report at its meeting on 22/02/16 and the comments have been incorporated in the final version.
<b>2</b>	<b>Finance / Section 151</b> (Mandatory)	The Head of Function (Resources) / S151 Officer contributed as a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
<b>3</b>	<b>Legal / Monitoring Officer</b> (Mandatory)	
<b>4</b>	<b>Human Resources (HR)</b>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Property</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Information and Communication Technology (ICT)</b>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Scrutiny</b>	The Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee (12/04/16) will consider the robustness of the Policy Document and the role of Scrutiny in monitoring partnerships.
<b>8</b>	<b>Local Members</b>	Not Applicable
<b>9</b>	<b>Any external / other bodies</b>	

**E - Risks and any mitigation (if applicable)**

<b>1</b>	<b>Economic</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Anti-poverty</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	Not Applicable
<b>4</b>	<b>Environmental</b>	Not Applicable
<b>5</b>	<b>Equality</b>	Not Applicable
<b>6</b>	<b>Outcome agreements</b>	Not Applicable
<b>7</b>	<b>Other</b>	Not Applicable

**F – Appendices:**

Policy Document – Working in Partnership (**Appendix 1**)

**FF - Background Papers (please contact the author of the report for further information):**

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## **WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP**

### **POLICY DOCUMENT**

This policy has been formulated within the context of the following documents by the Isle of Anglesey County Council:

1. Partnerships toolkit (providing guidelines for establishing and developing partnerships)
2. A corporate, central register of partnerships
3. Partnership monitoring arrangements (to keep track of outcomes and financial matters)
4. Arrangements for annual reviews of key partnerships.

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## APPENDIX

Corporate Plan: themes and priorities

**Appendix 1**

## 1. Introduction and context

The Isle of Anglesey County Council has extensive experience of working in partnership, be it on a local, regional or national level<sup>1</sup>. With increasing pressure on public finances, it is imperative that the Council ensures that clear guidelines are in place for determining when to establish partnerships, which service(s) and the outcomes expected of them and for the sound management of the relationship in order to:

- enable us to deliver on our Corporate Plan and strategic priorities (**Appendix1**). Also, to improve the experience and outcomes for those individuals who use our services
- evidence value for money or cost efficiency in our future investments and ensure clear and measurable outcomes
- respond to partnership risks and ensure that areas for development are addressed
- have clarity around accountability and monitoring arrangements
- identify any scope to rationalise partnerships and ensure a clear procedure for bringing any arrangements to an end.

This document focuses on partnerships where the Council chooses to work with other organisations in the private, public or voluntary sector. It does not address the links made through the procurement process<sup>2</sup>.

This policy therefore summarises the Council's vision for partnership working and supplements the individual partnership statements that already exist eg Isle of Anglesey Compact (partnership agreement with the Voluntary Sector), the Shared Community Charter with the Town and Community Councils on the Isle of Anglesey.

## 2. Definition of partnership

The term partnership is being used increasingly in the public, private and voluntary sectors and therefore has many definitions. In the context of this policy document, a partnership is defined as:

**A joint working arrangement where the partners are otherwise independent bodies, agree to co-operate to achieve a common goal of community cohesion and to achieve it, create an organisational structure or process and agreed programme.**

A partnership is therefore a collaborative arrangement that could include any one or more of the following elements where partners:

- Agree to work together to achieve common objectives and outcomes for the community
- establish a new structure to achieve objectives and outcomes and where appropriate, create a new organisational structure separate to their own organisation
- plan and implement a jointly agreed programme, which may well involve joint staffing and/or resources
- share accountability, information, risks and benefits
- may be required by statute to come together for the purposes of joint working.

Collaboration describes the creation of sustainable relationships with a supplier(s) in the public, private or voluntary sectors or a social enterprise to deliver services, carry out projects or acquire supplies and equipment. The benefits include better planning, integration of services for customers, access to new and scarce skills, economies of scale, community benefits or joint investment eg job creation or other positive impacts on the local economy.

Based on this definition of partnership, the key partnerships in which the Council are involved are listed in a corporate, central register which is reviewed annually (**the current Register is on the Council's website**).

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<sup>1</sup> Annual Improvement Report 2014/15 (incorporating the Corporate Assessment Report 2015), Wales Audit Office December, 2015

<sup>2</sup> Circumstances in which the Council would provide an opportunity to a range of organisations or individuals to provide their services for a specific purpose through a competitive process with the Council selecting one provider and confirming the arrangements by agreement



### 3. Why work in partnership?

There needs to be absolute clarity as to the circumstances under which it is appropriate for the Council to work in partnership with others and that this be considered in a completely transparent manner – by measuring against a set of criteria.

There are a number of reasons why working in partnership benefits the Council and the communities of Anglesey:

- I. **Strategic planning** – some matters extend beyond the boundaries of individual local councils and it could be beneficial for a number of councils (and possibly other organisations) to work together to have a greater influence. For example:
  - North Wales Councils collaborating with Further Education Colleges because their catchment areas are much broader than those of any individual council
  - Councils in the North working together with strategic partners to achieve economic growth by focusing on infrastructure, education and skills and the supply chain (North Wales Economic Ambition Board)
  - Isle of Anglesey and Gwynedd Councils working together to establish a local services board and partnership unit for the North West to provide strategic support across a number of partnerships.
- II. **Sharing resources and expertise** – some areas are specialised and there are benefits in public bodies working together and sharing resources and expertise rather than working separately. For example:
  - Raising standards in our schools requires specialist support and is a difficult area for the Council to justify creating a dedicated resource because the nature of the work is constantly changing with different schools needing different support from time to time. North Wales local authorities therefore receive a specialist service from a regional service<sup>3</sup>
  - There are some aspects in the area of Planning<sup>4</sup> where it is appropriate to share resources with neighbouring councils. As a result, a joint planning policy unit has been created with Gwynedd Council to discharge these duties.
- III. **Working across sectors** – it is essential that the Council works effectively in conjunction with partners to provide a high quality service to the residents of the Island. For example:
  - Jointly planned services in the field of health and social care. To this end, the Council is working with the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to ensure co-ordinated care for individuals who need support.
- IV. **Local collaboration** – there are national bodies that have responsibilities on Anglesey such as Natural Resources Wales, the Wales Probation Service. Also, there is joint working already happening through a number of networks such as the Voluntary Sector Liaison Committee, Engagement and Consultation Board and the Town & Community Councils Forum. Where our interests coincide and where there are opportunities to collaborate, it makes sense for us to work together to make the best use of public finances.

### 4. Criteria for selecting partnerships

In considering whether or not to work in partnership with other organisations, it is important that we consider each request or opportunity against a number of criteria. With the restrictions and pressure on public finances intensifying, we should not continue with partnerships merely because they have existed historically. There must be clarity as to why we should continue with any partnership, ensuring that we work with the most appropriate bodies. Therefore, any partnership should be measured against a set of criteria:

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<sup>3</sup> GwE- North Wales Schools Effectiveness and Improvement Service

<sup>4</sup> For example creating a Local Development Plan

- A. **Aim** – clarity regarding the purpose of any partnership is essential. It should be ensured that any activity corresponds with the direction of the Council's Corporate Plan and contributes to the priorities that have been identified and endorsed by the County Council.
- B. **Value for Money** – an important benchmark in establishing or determining whether to continue with most partnerships. However, in some circumstances other criteria will be more important for example ensuring community resilience. In such circumstances, this should be made clear in the documents requesting permission to establish a partnership.
- C. **Resilience** – it is crucial that services are resilient, particularly if they offer services to the public. Any partnership should therefore ensure that its contribution is delivered in a manner that reinforces the Council's ability to provide high quality and reliable services for their users.
- D. **Accessing grants** – an increasing number of grants now make it essential for organisations to work in partnership eg from Welsh Government, Europe and other organisations. However, the fact that grant funding is available is not always a sufficient reason in itself to establish or commit to a partnership. Often, there are long term implications to receiving grants such as – the need for resources to maintain the original investment, the implications for the workforce who are directly involved in a grant funded scheme. It is therefore crucial that any such partnership can evidence how it contributes to the other criteria namely the aim, value for money and resilience.
- E. **Added value** – there are also broader benefits to working in partnership by bringing together local knowledge and expertise, using new methods of working and sharing resources and good practice in order to get the best value from the money that we spend. It is important that we encourage organisations to look at what other bodies offer and to identify the most efficient ways of working together in order to develop community resilience.

## 5. Adhering to Council policies

It should be ensured that any partnership either adopts the Council's policies or similar policies of other partners or policies that are consistent with those of the County Council. In particular, it should be ensured that any partnership adheres to the following policies:

- Equality Strategy
- Welsh Language Standards
- Health and Safety
- Information Governance
- Safeguarding
- Workforce
- Well-being Statement<sup>5</sup>

## 6. Governance and performance management arrangements

Once the Council has decided to establish a partnership or continue in partnership, demonstrating clearly how the criteria were addressed, it must be ensured that Governance and Performance Management arrangements are firmly embedded before the work commences, or in exceptional circumstances, within 2 months of forming the partnership.

It must be ensured that the following elements are in place:

- I. **Agreement** – a document that clearly outlines all the partners, the aim of the partnership and the service(s) provided must be available to all partners. This can be a Contract, a Service Level Agreement or a Memorandum of Joint Understanding, depending on the nature of the partnership.

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<sup>5</sup> Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 & Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

- II. Clear and measurable outcomes** – the outcomes to be expected of any partnership should be clear from the outset. For partnerships that feed into the Council's Performance Outcomes or those collected nationally, it should be ensured that the wording and the method of data collection is consistent with the guidance available for this type of activity.
- III. Resources and funding** – as a rule, there will be an expectation upon the Council to contribute to a partnership either in the form of staff, a financial contribution or by attending meetings to provide input to the work. These expectations should be clearly laid out before agreeing to participate in any partnership. Partnership expectations could change over time and the partnership's arrangements will need to be reviewed if that happens in order to agree to any changes.
- IV. Governance** – clear and robust governance arrangements will be needed for any partnership. Those arrangements will vary depending on the nature of the partnership and the resources the Council will be contributing. Whatever the nature of the partnership, there should be clear procedures in place to manage the work and ensure adherence to the original agreement. Processes must be in place to ensure that the work programme is being implemented, that there is a clear process of identifying and mitigating risks, issues of integrity, propriety and value for money.
- V. Reports** – it is expected that an annual report is provided clarifying how the partnership has achieved against the aim and the agreed work programme. The annual report should be commensurate with the nature of the partnership – for example a one or two page report may be sufficient for some partnerships but a more detailed report would be expected in other cases. This should be agreed when establishing the partnership.
- VI. Reviews** – the Council should periodically review the value it receives from each of the partnerships. This review will vary from partnership to partnership and will depend on the nature of the work and the contribution of the Council. Each partnership should be reviewed at least once every three years and the frequency of reviews should be agreed with the other partners when setting up the partnership.

## APPENDIX 1

### CORPORATE PLAN 2014-2017

#### Key Themes:

**THEME 1:** professional and well-run

**THEME 2:** innovative, ambitious and outward-looking

**THEME 3:** Customer, Citizen and Community focused

**THEME 4:** valuing and developing our People

**THEMA 5:** committed to Partnership

**THEME 6:** achieving

#### Priorities:

1. Transforming Social Care for Older Adults
2. Regenerating Our Communities and Developing our Economy
3. Improving Education, Skills and Modernising our Schools
4. Increasing our Housing Options and Reducing Poverty
5. Transforming our Leisure and Libraries Provision
6. Becoming Customer, Citizen and Community focused
7. Transforming our Information and Communication Technologies