



AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

Report Title	Northampton Borough Council Partnership Protocol
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AGENDA STATUS: PUBLIC

Audit Committee Meeting Date:	25 July 2011
Policy Document:	None
Directorate:	Chief Executive's Office
Accountable Cabinet Member:	Councillor David Palethorpe

1. Purpose

- 1.1 At a meeting of the Audit Committee earlier this year, the committee asked that the partnership protocol that was adopted by the authority in May 2011 be brought to them for information.

2. Recommendations

That the Audit Committee:

- 2.1 Comment on the partnership protocol.
- 2.2 Note the content of the report and the Protocol, which is attached at **appendix 1**.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

- 3.1.1 Following the review of partnership arrangements undertaken as part of the 2009/10 Internal Audit plan which identified a number of weaknesses that needed to be addressed, a project group was established to develop a Partnership Protocol for NBC.

- 3.1.2 In May 2011 the Northampton Borough Council Partnership Protocol was adopted and subsequently communicated to officers. Details of the protocol are published on the council's internet at:
www.northampton.gov.uk/partnershipprotocol
- 3.1.3 The protocol integrates the requirement for service areas to review their involvement in partnerships with existing processes, such as service planning and change management, rather than creating a separate and potentially bureaucratic protocol.
- 3.1.4 The protocol establishes a clear policy on engagement and disengagement, with clear monitoring and performance criteria.
- 3.1.5 It is also designed to empower service areas to self regulate their involvement in partnership, whilst ensuring from the corporate centre that they conduct regular monitoring and review
- 3.1.6 In addition to the protocol officers are provided with guidance for what they must consider when entering into a partnership. The way in which they must do this is not heavily prescribed, in recognition that a single protocol could not cover the plethora of different partnerships that the council is currently involved in or may wish to join in the future, particularly as a result of initiatives such as Localism and Big Society.

3.2 Issues

- 3.2.1 There are none.

3.3 Choices (Options)

- 3.3.1 There are none.

4. Implications (including financial implications)

4.1 Policy

- 4.1.1 The Partnership Protocol outlines the council's policy on engaging in and exiting partnership arrangements.

4.2 Resources and Risk

- 4.2.1 Careful accounting of resources the council commits to partnership working is crucial and decisions made as part of such arrangements need to be aligned to our plans and future decision-making. The protocol is designed to prevent the council committing to projects without adequate exit strategy and awareness of long-term financial implications.

4.3 Legal

4.3.1 The protocol encourages the council to consider whether the governance arrangements it has in place for the partnerships to which it belongs are adequate and appropriate.

4.4 Equality

4.4.1 The Partnership Protocol commits the Council to ensuring that any partnership arrangement it enters into meets the statutory requirements outlined in Equalities Legislation.

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

4.5.1 Officers with experience of partnership working, as well as risk management, performance management and legal expertise were involved in the development of the protocol.

4.6 Other Implications

4.6.1 There are no other implications.

5. Background Papers

5.1 None

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