

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Standards Committee - 25 January 2011

Protocol for Local Authority Partnership Working

Report of the Monitoring Officer

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Committee is required to review the Partnership Behaviour Protocol attached to this report and give their views as to whether it is something that Taunton Deane Borough Council should adopt when working with its various partners.

2. Background

- 2.1 Standards for England has been working with Manchester City Council and their partners to produce a protocol for authorities to use with their partner organisations to help ensure that there are high ethical standards being adhered to by all - a copy of which is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 2.2 The reason for this protocol is that partners who are involved in local authority decision making who are not Members of an authority are not subject to the same rules governing their behaviour as elected or co-opted Members on the same bodies.
- 2.3 The approach involves partners developing a shared set of values and behaviours that they think should underpin partnership work.
- 2.4 Due to the variety of different ways in which local authorities work in partnership with others there can be considerable variations in governance arrangements, therefore the protocol has been designed to attempt to address inconsistencies and to improve the governance of partnerships.
- 2.5 It should be noted that good governance can help to promote:-
- * high quality leadership;
 - * good decision making;
 - * clarity in relation to roles, responsibilities and activities; and
 - * successful working relationships.
- 2.6 The aim of the partnership behaviour protocol is to:-
- embed high ethical standards in partnership working;
 - address the disparity of rules and scrutiny governing those involved in local decision making;

- enable partners to 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 partner's commitment to behaviour of a certain standard; and
 - improve performance management.
- 2.7 The protocol is useful both in forming partnerships, for example in assessing the compatibility of partners by asking them to sign up to some common values and behaviours but also in managing partnerships, for example enabling those engaged in partnership working to hold each other to account for the values and behaviours outlined in their agreed protocol.
- 2.8 The partnership behaviour protocol does not have a statutory basis or have sanctions attached to it, therefore Standards for England has suggested that there could be a role for Standards Committees in maintaining and overseeing adherence to the protocol.
- 2.9 The role suggested for Standards Committees by Standards for England are that they could:-
- act as chief promoters and champions of the Partnership Behaviour Protocol;
 - be well suited to oversee both the implementation of and adherence to the Partnership Behaviour Protocol;
 - play an active role where issues do arise in a partnership, for example one partner challenges another partner about their behaviour in relation to the protocol; and
 - mediate between partners where agreement cannot be reached or issues cannot be resolved.
- 2.10 An initial view of the Committee is sought before further consultation with CMT, the Community Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Governance Committee who will then sign off the Protocol.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications in this report.

4. Equalities Impact

- 4.1 This protocol would help to ensure that all our partners needs are taken into consideration and would give the opportunity for specific concerns to be addressed.

5. Environmental and Community Safety Implications

5.1 There are none in connection with this report.

6. Consultation Implications

6.1. This report will be considered by Corporate Management Team, the Community Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Governance Committee

7. Links to Corporate Aims

7.1. None in relation to this report.

8. Risk Management

8.1. If the protocol is not adopted then there may be inconsistencies in how partners deal with each and governance arrangements may not be as robust as they should be.

9. Legal Implications

9.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

10. Recommendation

10.1 The Committee is required to review the Partnership Behaviour Protocol attached to this report and give their views as to whether it is something that Taunton Deane Borough Council should adopt when working with its various partners.

Contact Tonya Meers, Monitoring Officer,
t.meers@tauntondeane.gov.uk Tel: 01823 356391

Appendix A



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.