

**HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Report To:** Cabinet  
17 July 2012

**From:** Scrutiny Committee 2

**Subject: POLICY REVIEW – PARTNERSHIPS – FINAL REPORT**

All Wards

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**1.0 SUMMARY:**

1.1 Between December 2011 and March 2012 the Committee undertook a review on Partnerships. This report sets out the Committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations.

**2.0 INTRODUCTION:**

2.1 Partnerships was regarded as an appropriate topic for review as the Council was committed to working in effective and efficient partnerships.

2.2 The Committee as a whole undertook the review and the terms of reference were:-

- Identify the partnerships and what they do
- Assess the cost effectiveness of the partnerships
- Explore the benefits on rural areas of the partnerships
- Evaluate feedback mechanisms

2.3 The following evidence, arranged through the Enabling Officer, was provided at meetings of the Committee:

5 July 2011

- Agreed Project Plan.

7 February 2012

- Evidence gathering.

1 November 2011

- Reviewed Project Plan.

6 March 2012

- Concluded Review.

10 January 2012

- Evidence gathering.

**3.0 OTHER EVIDENCE**

3.1 The following Council officers also attended meetings of the committee to give evidence:

- Sandra Walbran, Assistant Chief Executive, Hambleton & Richmondshire District Councils;
- Maurice Cann, Head of Regulatory Services, Hambleton & Richmondshire District Councils;
- Les Chapman, Building Control Manager, North Yorkshire Building Control Partnership;
- Pat Wilson, Community Safety Manager, Hambleton & Richmondshire District Councils;
- Councillor Carl Les, Chairman Community Safety Partnership.

## **4.0 FINDINGS**

- 4.1 The terms of reference of the review were aimed at answering the following key questions:
- What is the current policy of the Council and why is this so?
  - Who is the policy aimed at, who is intended to benefit and how is this measured?
  - What is central to the delivery of the policy (resources, stakeholder involvement, etc)?
  - Is the current policy working (is it delivering the stated outcomes and do the recipients benefit)?
  - Does the policy need to change – is it still valid?
  - Can the policy and the service be improved – if so how?
  - What impact will the policy have on other partners?
- 4.2 Based on the written and oral evidence presented, the Committee's findings were as follows:
- 4.2.1 The Committee identified the partnerships from the Register of Significant Partnerships. This Register detailed the Partnerships, the Lead Officer, the date the Partnership was established, when a report was due to be submitted to the relevant Leaderships Board (every 3 months) and also the date of when a significant review of the Partnership was due to be carried out (annually). Any significant issues from the reviews were reported to Strategic Management Team.
- 4.2.2 The Committee wished it to be noted that the four main Significant Partnerships it had recognised that had a substantial financial contribution were as follows:-
- North Yorkshire Building Control Partnership;
  - Audit Partnership;
  - Hambleton Strategic Forum; and
  - Community Safety Partnership.
- 4.2.3 In order to explore the Significant Partnerships further, the Committee wished to examine the North Yorkshire Building Control (NYBCP) and Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) in greater detail.
- 4.2.4 The Committee accepted that the Register of Significant Partnerships was not an exhaustive list of all those Partners that the Council were or had been involved in working closely with. The list of 'other parties' the Council had worked with or was continuing to work with was considered outside the remit of the review and the Committee agreed to concentrate on the Register of Significant Partnerships. Beyond Significant Partnerships, the Council works with a multitude of other individuals, organisations and partners to fulfil its role effectively. A partnership can be any arrangement between two or more bodies (public or private) which come together for their mutual benefit and that of the community.
- 4.2.5 In relation to assessing the cost effectiveness of each of the Partnerships, the Committee was informed that each Significant Partnership's Value for Money was reviewed through the relevant Leadership Boards. There was a specific section contained within the template relating to 'Added Value' which asked specific questions such as 'How does this partnership add value to the Council?', 'How does this partnership add value to other partners?', etc.
- 4.2.6 Performance Monitoring was reported quarterly to the relevant Leadership Boards and there was Member representation from the Scrutiny Committees on these Boards when performance reports were being considered.

- 4.2.7 In relation to ascertaining the benefits on rural areas of the partnerships, the Committee noted that, as part of the template for reviewing the partnerships, the questions asked relating to how and who the partnership would benefit sought to identify different bodies, geographical areas, community groups, etc that would benefit from the partnership. The Committee was informed that there were lots of different benefits that could be achieved such as financial, increased community safety, availability of business and housing opportunities, and so on.
- 4.2.8 The outcomes/outputs of the partnerships were measured through collection of data for performance indicators but the Committee was informed that performance indicators were not always the best method of proving the benefits. For instance, the introduction of community schemes such as boxing clubs could improve community safety by offering different groups of the community different activities to get involved in which gave them an incentive to improve their quality of life, which could result in the reduction of the number of anti social behaviour incidents.
- 4.2.9 The Committee raised concerns regarding feedback mechanisms and suggested that there was room for improvement.
- 4.2.10 The Committee acknowledged that there were various mechanisms in place for feedback through performance monitoring but it was felt that this was not entirely satisfactory. It was suggested that the information made available to Members of the Leadership Boards be made more widely available to other Members.
- 4.2.11 The Committee did not feel that Cabinet Member reports to Council were sufficient in order for the relevant Cabinet Member to give a full in-depth report of current issues, etc. It was suggested that this could be improved by more frequent reporting back through articles in the Members' Bulletin rather than just through a report back at Council which was less frequent.
- 4.2.12 Following an in-depth investigation into the North Yorkshire Building Control Partnership and the Community Safety Partnership, the Committee concluded that these Partnerships presented good value for money and were satisfied with the current performance and operation of the Partnerships.

## **5.0 CONCLUSIONS:**

### **5.1 What is the current policy/practice/procedure of the Council and why is this so?**

The Council maintains a Register of Significant Partnerships (SP). Before entering into a SP and when they are reviewed, a series of questions are posed to ensure a clear idea of the purpose of the partnership and the process for entering into the arrangements. A template has been created as a guide and for consistency. The completion of the template is not an end in itself. The partnership has to be operated in accordance with the proposals identified by the answers to the questions. This is the responsibility of the Lead Officer of both the partnership and the District Council.

### **5.2 Who is the policy/practice/procedure aimed at, who is intended to benefit and how is this measured?**

All parties involved in the relevant Partnership(s), Members, Officers and the residents of the District.

5.3 What is central to the delivery of the policy/practice/procedure (resources, stakeholder involvement, etc)?

Those entering into partnerships need to fully understand the relationship between the partner organisations. The relationship needs to be properly documented in writing, together with roles and responsibilities, possibly in a Partnership Agreement. How representatives will be appointed, removed and held to account is important.

5.4 Is the current policy/practice/procedure working (is it delivering the stated outcomes and do the recipients benefit)?

Evidence gathered indicates that the level of service is satisfactory and that the policies and procedures in place were considered to be appropriate.

5.5 Does the policy/practice/procedure need to change – is it still valid?

The current policies and practices of the Council are still valid.

5.6 Can the policy/practice/procedure and the service be improved – if so how?

Feedback mechanisms was highlighted as a concern and it was suggested that documentation regarding Partnerships could be circulated more widely to Members for their information.

5.7 What impact will the policy have on other partners?

The policies and procedures in place impact on all the partners involved with the Partnerships as they are all accountable for delivery of the Partnership's roles and responsibilities, Partnership Agreements, etc.

**6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:**

6.1 To recommend to Cabinet that the:-

- (1) the Register of Significant Partnerships and the existing methodology of monitoring and evaluation of these Partnerships be noted as satisfactory;
- (2) the North Yorkshire Building Control Partnership; Audit Partnership; Hambleton Strategic Forum and Community Safety Partnership are cost effective and represent good value for money;
- (3) Cabinet Members provide regular updates on each of the Significant Partnerships as part of their reports to Council; and
- (4) Cabinet be asked to agree that the Scrutiny Representatives on the Boards be permitted to remain for the duration of the whole meeting and not just for the Performance related discussions.

COUNCILLOR J PREST  
CHAIRMAN

Background Papers: None  
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**Note**

**COMMENTS OF THE PARTNERSHIPS BOARD ON THE DRAFT**

The Partnerships Board discussed the draft report and no issues were raised.

The Partnerships Board supported all the recommendations and noted the request with regard to recommendation (3) above relating to Cabinet Member Statements to Council.

Recommendation (4) above was formulated after the meeting of the Partnership Board.

### **Memorandum of Evidence**

The Committee took evidence from Sandra Walbran, Assistant Chief Executive, Hambleton and Richmondshire District Councils (HDC and RDC)

Sandra Walbran gave a presentation to the Committee, a copy has been previously circulated and is available as part of the Committee's records.

The Committee requested clarification of the list of Partnerships as it appeared to be incomplete, based on Members' knowledge of 'other bodies' that were in existence.

The Committee was advised that the list of 'other bodies' was illustrative as a list of organisations and individuals that the Council worked with in different capacities at different levels. There was a separate register of 'significant' Partnerships which had been circulated and which has been covered in the presentation. The Council had to fulfil its statutory and community duties and it did that through working with others, in partnership. Distinction needed to be made between those partnerships that were 'significant' compared to the general principle of partnership working.

The Committee enquired whether the Significant Partnerships were contractual and whether they had agreed objectives. The Committee was advised that this varied, some Partnerships had contracts, others had memorandum of understanding and others had partnership agreements.

The Committee wished to know whether the Council had a statutory obligation to engage with certain partners. The Committee was informed that, in order to fulfil some statutory functions, the Council had a statutory obligation to work in Partnership, for example the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Children & Young People Partnership, the Safeguarding Board and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. There were others Partnerships where there was no statutory obligation but required collaborative working as a number of different bodies had obligations to fulfil and they needed to do this together to achieve certain outcomes.

The Committee asked whether it was a decision of the Council whether or not to get involved in Partnerships and was advised that some partnerships were set up in response to statutory requirements, for example the Local Strategic Partnerships were set up as a response to the Local Government Act that required local authorities to produce and deliver a Sustainable Community Strategy for the whole district. To deliver the needs of the district, different organisations needed to come together to work collaboratively. This was distinct from the legal requirements which were the direct responsibility of the Council to deliver.

In relation to those partnerships where there was a commercial aspect to them, such as the Audit Partnership and the Building Control Partnership, the Committee asked if there was there a clawback regarding any financial commitment. The Committee was advised that any money put into these partnerships was directed at achieving value for money in service delivery. An example was the Building Control Partnership – the Partnership could not make a profit and had to break even at the end of each year. Hambleton put in approximately £40k each year in order to deliver the service. However it had been highlighted through performance monitoring that there might be a need for an additional contribution of between £8k and £25k in 2011/12 due to the financial downturn in the economic climate.

The Committee took evidence from Maurice Cann, Head of Regulatory Services, Hambleton and Richmondshire District Councils and Les Chapman, Building Control Manager of the North Yorkshire Building Control Partnership

Maurice Cann provided background information on the North Yorkshire Building Control Partnership (NYBCP) which had been established in September 2007. The North Yorkshire Building Control Partnership had been the first Local Authority Building Control Partnership in the region. It provided a flexible and modern building control service on behalf of Hambleton, Richmondshire, Ryedale, Scarborough and Selby District Councils. The annual cost of Building Control to Hambleton District Council (HDC) in 2007 was £150k but because of the formation of the Partnership it was now approximately £42/43k, which was a significant difference. Over the last 2/3 years, because of the economic climate, use of the service had dropped. As a result the Partnership had been reactive to the position it had found itself in and reduced in size through redundancies. HDC had Member representative on the NYBCP Board which was the Cabinet Member for Partnerships, Councillor Tim Swales. Meetings of the board took place at least 3 times per year. Further detailed information could be found on the website: [www.nybcp.org](http://www.nybcp.org)

The Committee enquired whether there were any costs associated with the NYBCP and was advised that the NYBCP works in a competitive environment with the private sector. It could not make a profit, it had to break even. The NYBCP had a 3 year accounting period. Between 2001/02 and 2007 the service did make a significant profit and this was put back into the Council's funds. In partnership, the legal arrangement regarding any income is that if any 'profit' is made it is divided equally amongst the partners. There were two elements to costs – fee earning work and non-fee earning. The contribution of £43k from HDC contributed to the non-fee earning costs.

Concern was raised regarding any deficit by the Partnership incurred by carrying out the statutory non-fee earning responsibilities. The Committee asked whether the private sector had any restrictions regarding non-fee work or was this specific to the Local Authorities and was informed that this was specific to Local Authorities.

The Committee asked if it was decided that all work had to go to Approved Inspectors and the Local Authority would just fulfil its statutory obligations what would the costs be and was advised that this would cost more than currently being a member of the Partnership. The Committee concluded that the Partnership was good value for money.

The Committee took evidence from Pat Wilson, Community Safety Manager, Hambleton and Richmondshire District Councils and Councillor Carl Les, Chairman, Community Safety Partnership

Pat Wilson gave a presentation to the Committee, a copy has been previously circulated and is available as part of the Committee's records.

The CSP Team comprised:

CSP Manager (District Council funded – split between HDC/RDC)

Senior Officer, Projects/Communications (part time) – funded by the Partnership

Anti-Social Behaviour Coordinator – employed by the Police funded through the Area Based Grant

Admin Support (part time) – funded by the Partnership

Domestic Abuse Coordinator – funded by the Partnership

Analyst – 30% share

Councillor Les referred to the Terms of Reference for the Review and responded as follows:-

- Identify the partnerships and what they do  
The Community Safety Partnership was one of the significant partnerships recognised by the Council.
- Assess the cost effectiveness of the partnerships

This was difficult to measure but it was suggested that if the costs of the Partnership were compared to the outcomes and outputs it was extremely good value for money.

- Explore the benefits on rural areas of the partnerships  
It was suggested that there are very good benefits on rural areas, there is a good understanding of rural issues. Although it is appreciated that larger areas have more problems we have to try and keep a level playing field but be responsive to Crime & Disorder issues.
- Evaluate feedback mechanisms  
We should be doing more, ie being exposed to challenge such as being given the opportunity of attending meetings like Scrutiny.

The Committee raised concern regarding the methods of feedback and that there did not appear to be an effective method of circulating reports. It was suggested that all reports which were produced for the various Theme Boards should be made available for Members for their information.

The Committee wished to know what funding was put into the CSP and was advised that some partners had put money in, some never had and some had withdrawn their funding. There was a lot of resources, ie manpower, technology, etc which all helped bring the partnership together and make it work. The Committee was also advised that with the appointment of the new Policing Crime Commissioner, the allocation of any funding would be determined by him/her and it was unknown how much the Partnership would get.

The Committee asked if this is a statutory undertaking, how can the service be delivered without any funding and was advised that because it was a Partnership everybody worked together and evolved to get the best out of the Partnership.

The Committee commented that an area of concern was how the impact of the partnership was monitored against other impacts, ie statistics. How much was related to the efforts of the CSP Team as opposed to changes in society, education, etc? It was suggested that it was important to prioritise activities and monitor the outcomes. The Committee was advised that Partnership working impacted on the figures but how effectiveness was proved was is very difficult, ie local impact, personal impact on individuals. The value of the Partnership would not necessary be known until it had gone. To try and prove the value performance indicators had to be collected and this was done with every project, but to determine if this had been the `sole` contributor to crime and ASB reduction was of course not an easy task as many other things affected performance locally.