

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MIDSUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

To: Head of Corporate Resources	Report Number: JSC/16/13
From: Joint Scrutiny Committee	Date of meeting: 2 October 2013

REVIEW OF PARTNERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To examine the performance and reporting arrangements linked to governance, of Mid Suffolk and Babergh's Partnerships, including Councillor representation on outside bodies. This excludes contractual arrangements.
- 1.2 To gain an understanding of:
 - who we are in partnership with,
 - Member representation?
 - lines of accountability,
 - reporting arrangements and information flow,
 - financial assistance or grants provided,
 - performance monitoring,
 - relationship with strategic priorities,
 - benefits,
 - who makes decisions?
 - partnership review mechanisms.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members note and recommend the further work required to ensure we have good governance in all our partnerships, namely:
 - 2.1.1 Further work to be carried out on the definition of partnerships.
 - 2.1.2 A review is needed so that there is a clear understanding of who we should be working with to deliver the Council's strategic priorities and the benefits and savings therein.
 - 2.1.3 The review should encompass both Council's arrangements for Councillor representation on outside bodies and it is suggested that a joint review is concluded by April 2014. In addition, a comprehensive list of all the Council's partnerships should be maintained with a clear understanding of the relationships. A policy with supporting procedures should be developed to cover all partnerships to determine the governance arrangements.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter OR The Committee is asked to make a recommendation(s) to Executive / Strategy Committee / Full Council on the above matter(s).

3. Financial Implications

3.1 No specific financial implications.

4. Risk Management

4.1 This report is not closely linked with the Council's Corporate / Significant Business Risks. However associated risks are:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
<p>Not reviewing all of the Council's partnerships, could result in risks with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• an inability to manage costs effectively,• political risks (is the partnership appropriate),• a mis-fit with our priorities,• distraction from higher profile work,• conflicts of interest,• misrepresentation,• liabilities falling on the Councils	3 (probable)	2 noticeable	<p>Babergh review Councillor representation on outside bodies every 4 year.</p> <p>Other mitigation measures would result from approval of this report.</p>

5. Consultations

5.1 Conversations have taken place with the Governance Support Officers, the Corporate Manager for Commissioning and Procurement, the CSD Finance Business Partner and the Corporate Manager for Strong Communities.

6. Equality Analysis

6.1 There are no equality impacts associated with this report.

7. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

7.1 Contained within the report.

8. Key Information

8.1 Councillor Representation on outside bodies

8.1.1 From available records, Councillors currently sit on 63 bodies in Mid Suffolk and Babergh. Both Councils year books provide a guide to the representation as at the point in time that they were written.

8.1.2 Approximately 30% of these bodies have received grants from the Councils over the last few years.

- 8.1.3 The partnerships vary in size and complexity, with some Members having voting rights. The larger outside bodies include the Shared Revenues Partnership, the Joint Venture Company (Customer Service Direct), the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Haven Gateway Partnership, Suffolk Waste Partnership and South Suffolk Leisure.
- 8.1.4 There are two distinct review mechanisms in the two Councils. Babergh carry out a full review every four years; the last being in 2011 when the last district election took place. Councillors were provided with a guide on councillor representation on outside bodies which covered requirements such as training, attendance, independence to the grants process and requirements to report back. Mid Suffolk has never carried out a full review, although this has been requested by the Leader of the Council.
- 8.1.5 From a reporting perspective and for the larger outside bodies, strategic reports are reported to committee e.g. Haven Gateway, and Board Members also receive reports. For the smaller outside bodies, Babergh Councillors report back through seminars, circulating Councillor emails and placing articles/ reports in Member rooms i.e. SPARSE. At Mid Suffolk there is limited reporting, other than through some articles in Portfolio Holder reports which are reported to full Council.
- 8.1.6 The four-yearly Babergh review is comprehensive involving a questionnaire to the outside bodies which questions for example their status, and Councillors also receive a questionnaire asking them for further detail including the linkages to the Council's strategic priorities (where possible). An annual email is also sent requesting notification of any changes. This information is available upon request. At Mid Suffolk, a reactive approach is taken which just responds to notified changes in membership or changes to the bodies.
- 8.1.7 Both authorities present the Councillor appointments to full Council following conversations with group leaders.
- 8.1.8 A review is needed of the Mid Suffolk arrangements for Councillor representation on outside bodies and it is suggested that a joint review takes place across both Council's and is concluded by April 2014.
- 8.2 Partnerships (excl commercial relationships and bodies with Councillor representation)
- 8.2.1 There are a huge number of partnerships in place in the organisation, many of these informal; there is no comprehensive list available in the Councils so the extent of these isn't known. Conversations are needed with Members and the Integrated Management Team as part of a review.
- 8.2.2 As part of the Statement of Accounts work, the Council's are required to gather together a list of all joint arrangements that they have with partner organisations, known as a partnership review. In reality, what is provided is a list of known contracts that the organisations have entered into.
- 8.3 Other
- 8.3.1 Work is underway to identify our commercial relationships in preparation of a contract register.

- 8.3.2 Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are in place where there are commercial relationships for goods and services. Partnership agreements should also exist for those partnerships that are not contractually bound. For example, agreements reached with receivers of grant money as to how it should be spent and partnership agreements between local authorities and public bodies for the provision of services and sharing of resources e.g. Joint Emergency Planning and the future ICT arrangements with SCC. The area of partnership agreements should be covered as part of the overall partnership review suggested in this paper.
- 8.3.3 In the short time available to gather this information, it has become apparent that there is no clear definition for the terminology 'partnerships', it means different things to different people.
- 8.3.4 Across all partnerships, relationships are not determined i.e. granted, network, political, operational or profile relationships.
- 8.3.5 Whilst guidance exists at Babergh with regard to councillor representation on outside bodies, a policy is required across all partnerships to determine and oversee the governance arrangements. Procedures should underpin the policy and cover areas such as who to notify when new partnerships are formed, reporting arrangements and benefits/returns on investment. The policies should be enforced through good governance.
- 8.3.6 Whilst information on grants available to outside bodies has been captured as part of this report, information on creditor payments to all our partnerships has not been gathered. This is available on request and would provide Members with a fuller picture of the financial contribution/payments made.
- 8.3.7 A proposal is currently underway to develop lead Member roles at Babergh. Linkages should be made between the lead Member roles and the partnership representation to ensure good reporting and briefing lines.

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