

## PARTNERSHIP CODE

### INTRODUCTION

1. Partnership working can bring significant benefits, including improved outcomes and more efficient and integrated services for people who live, work and visit the city. However, partnerships need to be properly established and well managed if they are to deliver benefits and value for money.
2. This Partnership Working Code outlines the minimum requirements for establishing, managing and reviewing partnerships, as well as expected conduct of Council officers and Councillors who are a member of a partnership. The Code should be read in conjunction with other Council documents including the Council's Constitution [Code of Conduct for Members](#), [Officer Code of Conduct](#) and [Code for dealing with Joint Arrangements with Third Parties](#).

### PURPOSE

3. The purpose of this Code is to ensure that Councillors and Council officers involved in establishing, managing or contributing to a partnership are able to:
  - Demonstrate a clear rationale for the partnership and the Council's involvement
  - Obtain appropriate approval for setting up or being involved in a new partnership
  - Understand the Council's role, and their role, in a partnership
  - Apply clear standards for partnership working
  - Ensure time and resources invested in the partnership contributes to the Council's priority outcomes and is (and will continue to be) worthwhile in terms of adding value.

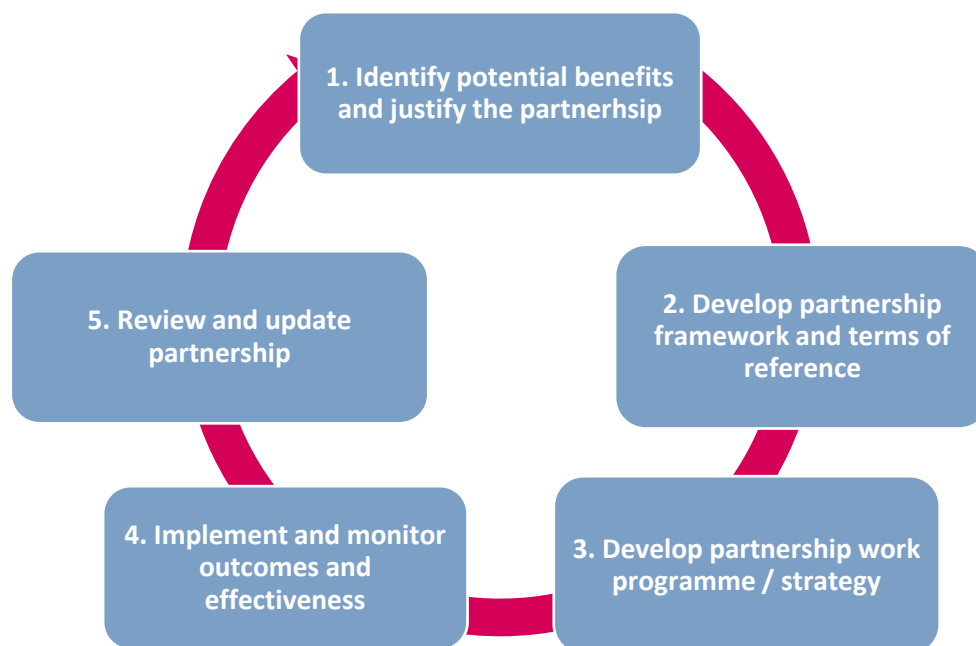
### WHAT IS A PARTNERSHIP?

4. In its broadest sense, a partnership can be defined as: *'an agreement between two or more independent bodies to work collaboratively to achieve an objective'*. The key characteristic is that the partners aim to achieve something they could not do alone, by pooling skills and other resources. For the purpose of this Code, these are two main types of partnerships. They are:

<b>Formal or strategic partnerships</b>	<b>Informal or non-strategic partnerships</b>
<p>The partnership meets one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is critical to the delivery of key Council objectives or level 1 strategies</li> <li>• It meets or delivers one of the Council's statutory obligations e.g. Crime and Disorder Act 1998</li> <li>• The Council's reputation could be damaged if the partnership fails to deliver</li> </ul>	<p>The partnership meets one or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It supports the delivery of an operational strategy or objective</li> <li>• It is established around a specific issue which will benefit from a range of partners being involved</li> </ul>

## IF THE COUNCIL IS ESTABLISHING OR LEADING A PARTNERSHIP

5. If you are establishing or leading a partnership on behalf of the Council you will need to give consideration and resources to its development, delivery and review and follow the **Partnership Cycle** obtaining appropriate approvals at each stage. The below sections provide detail as to the actions you will need to take.



### STEP 1: Identify potential benefits and justify the partnership

6. You should contact the Intelligence, Insight and Communications team as early as possible for an initial discussion about the proposals to establish a partnership. This will focus on identifying the need for the partnership, and the resources, timeline and approval route to establish and continue a partnership that is effective and value for money.
7. It is critical that partnership, whether formal or informal, provides value for money, and has clear outcomes that meet the strategic aims of the Council, as outlined in the priorities and outcomes in the [Southampton Corporate Plan 2020-2025](#). A formal or significant partnership should only be established if it is critical to the delivery of a key Council outcome or statutory obligation.
8. The Intelligence, Insight and Communications team will support you to:
- Review the requirement for a new partnership
  - Identify whether the partnership is formal/strategic or informal/non-strategic
  - Agree appropriate governance routes to obtain approval to proceed with establishing the partnership
9. The proposal to develop a new partnership must be agreed with the Intelligence Insight and Communications team, and approved by the **CMT-EMB** sponsor and lead

Councillor before you can proceed with establishing the partnership and developing the terms of reference for both formal and informal partnerships.

## **STEP 2: Develop the partnership framework and Terms of Reference**

10. Partnership arrangements can be complicated and could become overly bureaucratic. It is important to achieve a balance between having sufficient clarity about the purpose, benefits and role of the partnership, and ensuring any resources input into its development and monitoring are appropriate.
11. You will need to consider and document the following issues in the partnership's 'terms of reference':
  - Aims and objectives
  - Membership
  - Proportionate and effective governance arrangements
  - Protocol for dealing with conflicts.
12. You should refer to the Council's constitution for the [Code for Dealing with Joint Arrangements with Third Parties](#). This provides recommended procedures to avoid conflicts of interest for the Council, its employees and consultants engaged in any joint arrangements involving public funds, or transfer of public assets.
13. You should undertake a risk assessment for the partnership, and establish appropriate processes and procedures to ensure that:
  - All partners are aware of and understand the nature and extent of the key risks that they face both individually and as part of the partnership.
  - There is a shared commitment to effectively manage the key risks to ensure the partnership's objectives are achieved.

Further information on managing partnership risks is available to Southampton City Council Members and employees via the Council's intranet.

14. You must consider if establishing the partnership has any equality implications against the Equalities Act 2010 and ensure that the partnership considers and promotes its statutory Equality Duty. [The Equalities guidance and Equality and Safety Impact Assessments](#) provide a framework to ensure the decisions, strategies and policies of the partnership comply with their duties and ensure any potential negative impacts are mitigated and followed up as appropriate.
15. You should also consider whether the lifetime of the partnership is expected to be long-term or temporary. Some informal/non-strategic partnerships established to support a particular project or in response to a particular issue may only be required for a fixed period of time.
16. Arrangements for the partnership should then be documented in a formal written agreement or Terms of Reference, and this should be published on the Council's website. The Intelligence, Insight and Communications team can provide example Terms of Reference.
17. The draft Terms of Reference must be submitted to the Intelligence, Insight and Communications team and distributed to key stakeholders for review. As a minimum, this should include the partnership's EMB sponsor, Cabinet portfolio holder or lead Councillor for an informal partnership. Once a final draft is agreed, approval of the

Terms of Reference should be sought from EMB and Cabinet for a formal / strategic partnership.

### **STEP 3: Develop the Partnership Work Programme**

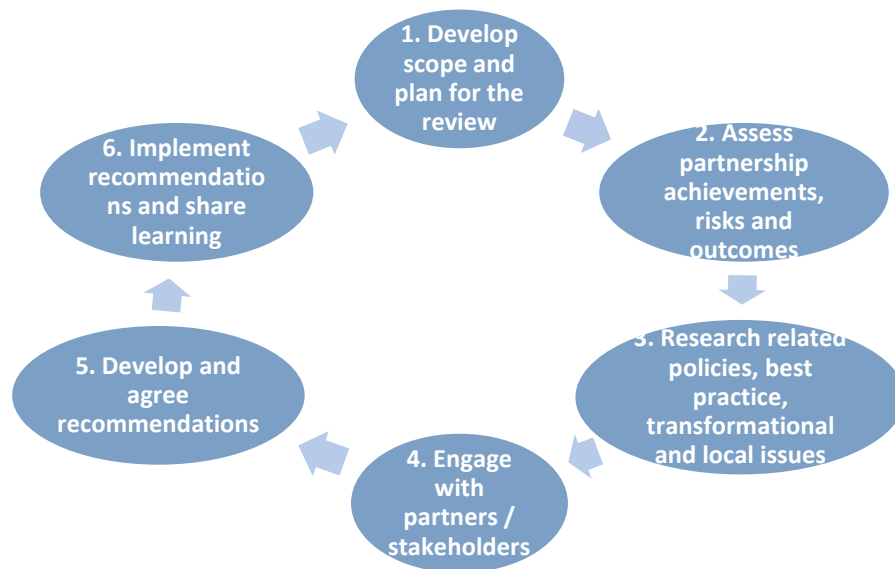
18. Once the partnership's Terms of Reference are approved, the objectives and aims of the partnership will need to be translated into an agreed work programme. This will outline how the partnership will achieve its objectives and set out the actions and outcomes that the partnership's success will be measured against.
19. Southampton City Council has an agreed Strategy and Policy Framework, which forms a key part of our 'one council' approach to strategy and policy development. If a new strategy requirement is identified as part of the development of the partnership work programme, you must contact the Intelligence, Insight and Communications team and follow the agreed strategy development process.

### **STEP 4: Implement and monitor the partnership**

20. The owner of the partnership will oversee and be responsible for implementing and monitoring the success, risks and outcomes of the partnership, and will need to ensure that the following issues are agreed and addressed on an ongoing basis:
  - Agree resources to deliver objectives
  - Agree clear accountability, monitoring and reporting processes
  - Establish communication mechanisms
  - Undertake risk assessments
  - Reporting outcomes and performance – reports should be shared and discussed regularly with the EMB sponsor and lead Member
  - Establish ongoing governance arrangements, including any sub groups.

### **STEP 5: Review and update the partnership**

21. During their lifetime, partnerships need to adapt to changing circumstances. As a minimum, an annual review should be undertaken of the outcomes achieved, including targets, performance, risk management, financial controls, value of the partnership (in terms of the partnership's and Council's objectives) and whether it is still fit for purpose and providing value for money. The review should be sufficiently robust and challenging, whilst remaining proportionate and appropriate to the working arrangements of the partnership.
22. The review of the partnership may be led by the partnership, however, independent input should be sought through the involvement of the Intelligence, Insight and Communications team.
23. The following steps should form part of the review:



24. At the end of the review, a report must be produced including recommendations. This should be cleared by the Projects, Policy & Performance team to ensure there are no significant implications for other partnerships, and that best practice opportunities, gaps and duplications have been identified. It should also be cleared by the partnership chair, and must be approved by the EMB sponsor and lead Member, as well as the partnership itself.

### DISSOLVING THE PARTNERSHIP

25. If you are considering dissolving the partnership, you should contact the Projects, Policy & Performance team as early as possible for advice on the process to follow.
26. You will need to prepare a briefing paper, with the Chair of the partnership, for approval by the EMB sponsor and lead Councillor for both formal/strategic and informal partnerships. This paper should clearly set out the following issues, in relation to dissolving the partnership:
- The rationale for dissolving the partnership
  - Implications for the Council’s priorities or statutory duties
  - Any unmet need of the Council and partners
  - Continued risks to the Council if the partnership no longer exists
  - Costs or funding implications
  - Proposals for resolving any outstanding issues
  - Overall learning and outcomes of the partnership
  - Views of the partnership members
  - Timeline and process for dissolving the partnership.

### COMMITTING RESOURCES TO A PARTNERSHIP WHERE THE COUNCIL IS NOT THE LEAD AUTHORITY

27. Where the Council is not leading a partnership, but there is a clear benefit in contributing or attending it, there will still be resource and reputational implications to be considered. It is important that the Council understands the potential benefit and outcomes that the partnership can offer to support the Council’s objectives and priorities.

28. If you are proposing to commit Council resources to a partnership, contact the Intelligence, Insight and Communications team to have an initial discussion about the partnership aims and objectives, to ensure the potential benefits of the partnership fit with the Council's priorities and strategies, and do not duplicate other partnerships.
29. The relevant EMB member and lead Councillor should be briefed on the aims and objectives of the partnership, the expected input and commitment from the Council and potential impact on the Council's priorities.

### **IF YOU ARE A MEMBER OF A PARTNERSHIP**

30. It is important that members of a partnership understand their own role and responsibilities. When committing Council resources (including employee time and money) to a partnership, your first and foremost duty is to the Council. As a Councillor or Council officer, you must adhere to the [Code of Conduct for Members](#) and [Officer Code of Conduct](#) in the Council's Constitution.
31. As a member of a partnership, you should consider if the partnership is following good practice, that it is contributing to the Council's values and priority outcomes and that it adds value, by actively engaging in any review of the partnership and ensuring that all the appropriate frameworks are in place.
32. Individually, as a representative of the Council on a partnership you should:
  - Represent the Council's views within the partnership
  - Act as the key link back to the Council to promote success of the partnership and inform / engage others in the decisions and activity of the partnership through effective communication
  - Be an active participant in meetings, develop issues for consideration by the partnership and execute additional activity in relation to delivering the partnership's objectives
  - Provide professional advice and expertise as appropriate to the partnership
  - Behave with honesty and integrity at all times, act in good faith and not take advantage, misrepresent or conceal anything pertinent to the partnership
  - Avoid and work to resolve conflicts
  - Highlight any personal interests, if they arise.
33. If you are concerned about anything to do with the partnership activity, contact the Projects, Policy & Performance team in the first instance who will offer support and advice on the matter, including whether it is appropriate to escalate the concern to the partnership chair, EMB sponsor or lead Councillor.

#### **Contact:**

Projects, Policy & Performance **team:** [policy.performance@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:policy.performance@southampton.gov.uk)