

Significant Partnerships - Progress with Governance Arrangements

The following summarises the progress the Council in 2008/09 in strengthening its governance arrangements for significant partnerships. This reflects the requirements of the Audit Commission's Use of Resources assessment and applies the principle contained in the Council's Partnership Working Framework of a proportionate application of governance arrangements.

Key Partnership Governance Requirements*	Progress: 2007/08 to 2008/09**	Outcome
Governance arrangements formally documented (Terms of Reference or equivalent)	<p>All 15 significant partnerships have Terms of Reference or equivalent, a number of which have strengthened their governance arrangements during the 08/09 year.</p> <p>In 2007/08, 14 of the Council's 15 significant partnerships had Terms of Reference or equivalent.</p>	The Council has strengthened its governance arrangements across a number of partnerships during the year, thereby focusing partnerships on their purpose and outcomes and reducing the Council's overall risk from inadequate governance arrangements.
Clear, outcome focused objectives	<p>100% of significant partnerships are delivering to clearer, more outcome focused objectives for 09/10.</p> <p>In 2007/08, 53% (8/15) were assessed as not having as clear as set of objectives as the Council would expect.</p>	The Council is now more focused on the delivery of outcomes from its significant partnerships and therefore better placed to assess the value for money being derived. See attached appendix for a summary of the objectives and actions proposed for 09/10.
Amount of money and resource at a partnership's disposal is understood and value for money assessment of costs and outcomes undertaken	<p>For 2008/09, value for money and resources of all significant partnerships assessed. All achieving some value for money, with 4 offering more substantial value for money: OHP, OWP, Homelessness Strategy Partnership and RSL Partnership.</p> <p>Since 2007/08, 2 partnerships, Cherwell Community Planning Partnership and Oxfordshire Economic Partnership have improved their value for money assessments.</p>	The Council can be assured that it is gaining value from its significant partnerships, above what it would have been able to achieve if operating on its own.
Regular review of financial and performance monitoring of partnerships	100% compliance, where appropriate, in both 07/08 and 08/09	Financial and performance monitoring are standing agenda items for many of the significant partnerships, providing active performance management tracking costs and outcomes during the year.
Council considers the risks of its significant partnerships and partnerships also consider	100% partnerships risk assessed by the Council in 08/09 66% (10 out of 15) partnerships risk assessed by the Council in 07/08.	The Council regularly risk assesses its involvement with all its significant partnerships as part of its routine risk

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their own risks	Many partnerships also have their own risk registers (eg OWP and the CSCP), and manage risk mitigation; this area will be strengthened further in 2009/10	management. As a result of the improvements in governance arrangements undertaken in 08/09, the Council's overall risk associated within inadequate governance arrangements has reduced during the 2008/09 year particularly the Homeless Strategy Partnership.
Sound data quality governance arrangements, based on risk, such as data sharing protocols	<p>A Community Safety "Oxfordshire Information Sharing Protocol" was finalised in Feb 2009, ready for signing during March 2009.</p> <p>During 2008/09, a draft data sharing agreement has been developed with other local authorities and partners in Oxfordshire, expected to be signed by end March 2009. As a priority, data sharing issues in Housing are being progressed across Oxfordshire, to involve Registered Social Landlords, and this is anticipated to be in place by 31 October 2009.</p>	Effective data sharing is key to efficient partnership working for many of the Council's significant partnerships. Developments in this area will continue during 2009/10 to provide increasing assurance that the Council and its partners have a sound legal basis underpinning data sharing arrangements as appropriate.
Effective procedures for resolving disputes	<p>100% compliance for appropriate Cherwell specific partnerships by mid March 2009. Governance of countywide partnerships is currently under review by Public Services Board which will incorporate this requirement.</p> <p>In 07/08, 3 Cherwell specific partnerships lacked dispute resolution procedures where it was appropriate and these partnerships now have proportionate arrangements in place.</p>	The Council has reviewed its position during the year working with relevant partnerships. Both the Council and the relevant partnerships are now in a stronger position with appropriate procedures in place should a dispute arise.

* Requirements are a summary of the partnership questions in the Use of Resources 2009 framework

**This position is across 15 significant partnerships on the Register during 2008/09. It does not refer to the 2 new partnerships that have been added to the list as a result of the early 2009 refresh; these will be audited for compliance as part of the internal audit due to complete by the end March 2009.