

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting:	23rd November 2009
Report of:	Monitoring Officer
Subject:	Standards in Partnerships Protocol

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 The report outlines the work which Standards for England (formerly the Standards Board for England) has undertaken to develop a protocol for values and behaviours for use within partnerships.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is invited to consider establishing a working group of Members and Officers, including appropriate Officers from the Partnership Team to develop a protocol for use within Cheshire East.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 High standards are a cornerstone of good governance and should become embedded in the culture of organisations. It is as important to achieve good governance in partnership arrangements as it is in individual organisations.
- 3.3 The development of a "Standards in Partnerships" Protocol will help to achieve this.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 None. There is no policy on the development of such a partnership arrangement.

7.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs

7.1 None identified.

8.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond

8.1 None identified.

9.0 Legal Implications

9.1 None identified

10.0 Risk Management

10.1 No risks identified.

11.0 Background and Options

11.1 Standards for England aims to encourage high standards in partnership working by defining appropriate behaviour in day-to-day partnership working. Good governance enables an authority to pursue its vision effectively as well as underpin that vision with mechanisms for control and management of risk¹.

11.2 Within partnerships, potential issues which can arise are that different partners work within different cultures, particularly in respect of openness and transparency. There is inconsistency in the codes which partners operate under and inconsistency in how they are enforced.²

11.3 Since the Autumn of 2008, Manchester City Council has assisted Standards for England in its work to develop a protocol for working in partnership. The key aim of the project was to develop a shared set of values and behaviours which will underpin partnership work. This will, in turn, encourage high standards and will enable partners to agree what behaviour can be expected from each other and provide a means by which to hold each other to account.

11.4 The draft protocol (attached) is consistent with the CIPFA SOLACE Good Governance Framework which was designed to assist authorities to consider how to review their governance arrangements. It also draws on the seven principles established by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (known as “the Nolan Principles”), ie selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Standards for England consider that such a protocol should not be regarded as a finished product, but rather as a framework that authorities can adapt to suit specific partnership arrangements.

¹ CIPFA SOLACE Good Governance Framework

² Greasley et al, 2006

- 11.5 It is recommended that a working group of Members and Officers be established, to include representation from the Partnership Team. The group will use the draft protocol as a framework for development of a local protocol for use across Cheshire East. In its work, Officers will involve partners as appropriate.

The group's findings will be reported to the Committee in due course.

12.0 Overview of Year One and Term One Issues

- 12.1 None identified.

13.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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APPENDIX

The 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 act 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 appropriate 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 "whistle-blowing" and dealing with complaints
- Ensure that "whist-blowers" are supported

- Actively promote a “no-blame” culture
- Support partners both to 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