

## **Audit and Governance Committee**

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| <b>Date of Meeting:</b>     | 17 January 2022  |
| <b>Report Title:</b>        | Review of governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations |
| <b>Report of:</b>           | Jane Burns, Executive Director of Corporate Services   |
| <b>Report Reference No:</b> | AG/28/21-22  |
| <b>Ward(s) Affected:</b>    | All  |

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### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1.** Effective risk management is central to good governance and supports the efficient delivery of the Council's objectives. The Audit and Governance Committee provides an independent assurance to the Council on the adequacy of the risk management framework.
- 1.2.** This report asks the Audit and Governance Committee to agree how they wish to review the governance and assurance arrangements for significant strategic partnerships or collaborations.
- 1.3.** Cheshire East Council participates in numerous partnerships and collaborations. As a first phase, it is necessary to produce an up-to date piece of mapping/analysis.
- 1.4.** There are a number of changes in the national context which impact in the partnership arena. For example, Integrated Care System, Levelling Up/Devolution, review of Local Enterprise Partnerships. This is a relevant consideration for the review.
- 1.5.** A scope and phasing of the review is proposed in Paragraph 5 below.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1.** That the scope and phasing of the review of the governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations be agreed, to be completed by the end of quarter 1 of 2022/23.

### 3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1. The Committee has asked for assurance on the Council's arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations.
- 3.2. The partnership landscape within which the Council operates is complex and dynamic. There are a number of changes in national context which impact in the partnership arena. For example, Integrated Care Systems, Levelling Up/Devolution, review of Local Enterprise Partnerships. It will be important, therefore for the review to take these issues into account in the phasing of the work.

### 4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. The Committee may decide to postpone the review until there is more clarity on national developments.

### 5. Background

- 5.1. In order to help with their deliberations, Members are asked to consider the following:
  - 5.1.1. care should be taken to avoid duplication and maintain the focus of an audit committee on its core functions as defined by its terms of reference rather than wider issues that are subject to the work of other committees or assurance functions.
  - 5.1.2. that the Audit and Governance Committee should operate at a strategic level with matters of operational detail resolved by service managers.
  - 5.1.3. the number and frequency of reports should be proportional to the risk in order to give the core business of an audit committee sufficient focus and attention and to avoid lengthy and thus unproductive meetings.
- 5.2. To assist with the review of governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations, a draft scope has been produced.
- 5.3. **Draft Scope**

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| Objectives | To seek assurance on the key local partnerships and collaborations for Cheshire East and to review how they are supporting the Council's objectives and ambitions.<br><br>To provide advice on what needs to be put in place at the outset of a partnership to provide good governance and assurance. |
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| Stakeholders       | Key partners   |
| Phasing            | <p>Phase 1 – Analysis and mapping of key local partnerships. Review of the council’s partnership protocols and guidance documents.</p> <p>Phase 2 – Identify and then focus on one key priority, for example, climate change, health inequalities, growing the economy (check wording in CP) to seek assurance on how partnership working is supporting ambition in these areas.</p> <p>Phase 3 - Review and report on the key findings.</p> |
| Outputs            | <p>Partnership mapping</p> <p>Report on how partnerships are supporting a key Council priority</p> <p>Report on key findings and next steps.</p>   |
| Lead officer       | Sarah Bullock, Director of Policy and Change   |
| Resources required | TBC  |
| Timeline           | Phase 1 to be completed by the end of quarter 1 2022/23.   |

## 6. National Context

There are some key, national policy developments that are, or will, impact on strategic partnership arrangements across Cheshire East. These include Integrated Care Systems, the anticipated levelling up White Paper and the review of Local Enterprise Partnerships. The implications of these developments will need to be carefully considered to ensure that appropriate governance and assurance arrangements are in place to meet new and emerging requirements.

### 6.1. Integrated Care Systems

6.1.1. The Health and Care Bill was published in July 2021, setting out key legislative proposals to reform the delivery and organisation of health services in England to support collaboration rather than competition. The new system of integrated care systems (ICSs) currently has a target implementation date of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022. ICSs are partnerships that bring together NHS organisations across a geographical area together with local

authorities and other partners to plan health and care services to meet local needs. ICSs are two-part, comprising an integrated care board (ICB) responsible for NHS strategic planning and allocation decisions, and an integrated care partnership (ICP), responsible for bringing together wider system partners to address wider health, public health and social care needs of the local population.

## **6.2 Levelling Up**

6.2.1 Since 2014 successive governments have devolved economic and public service functions across England. However 58% of England's population, across 83% of its land area, live in areas with no devolution deal (*Institute for Government Insight Dec 21*). At the 2019 general election the Conservative Party manifesto pledged to achieve "full devolution" across England. In the subsequent Queen's Speech the government announced its intention to introduce a Levelling Up White Paper in 2021, which will supersede the planned Devolution White Paper. The White Paper has been delayed and is intended to be published in 2022.

The aim of the levelling up agenda is to improve living standards, grow the private sector, improve health, education and policing, strengthen communities and local leadership, and restore pride in place. The Levelling Up agenda should align health, wellbeing and economic objectives as part of a strategic approach to the local economic development. The achievement of this agenda will require strong partnerships with private sector investors and government. County devolution deals are intended to help the government achieve its levelling up objectives. Negotiations on the next round of devolution deals have begun but there is little public information on emerging progress. The Levelling Up White Paper, and potential devolution arrangements across Cheshire and Warrington will have significant implications on partnership arrangements.

## **6.3 Local Enterprise Partnerships**

6.3.1 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are non-statutory partnerships formed between the public and private sector, tasked with identifying local economic priorities and promoting initiatives which boost economic growth. The government are conducting a review of the role, function and structure of Local Enterprise Partnerships with the aim of ensuring that the organisations are positioned to support productivity and growth most effectively and to complement central government policy. The review may result in councils losing their governance role as an accountable body for LEPs, responsible for entering into contracts and awarding funding on their behalf. There is also speculation that the number of LEPs (currently 38) may be reduced. Cheshire East Council is represented on the Board of the Cheshire and Warrington LEP. The

outcome of the LEP review is expected to be announced at the same time as the Levelling Up White Paper.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1. Legal**

7.1.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

### **7.2. Finance**

7.2.1. The work is expected to be done within existing resources.

### **7.3. Policy**

7.3.1. Cheshire East Council has good relationships with our partners across the public, private and third sectors. There are opportunities to work together even better to deliver our priorities. Partnership working is integral to the overall management of the authority.

7.3.2. The council to be regarded as a good partner. A review of partnership activity has been identified as a priority and is in line with the 2019 Corporate Peer Challenge report and the Corporate Plan.

### **7.4. Equality**

7.4.1. There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations of this update report.

### **7.5. Human Resources**

7.5.1. There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations of this update report.

### **7.6. Risk Management**

7.6.1. The Audit and Governance Committee should assure itself that the risk management framework is operating effectively by continually reviewing the risk profile, identifying where strategic risks are emerging and assuring the Committee on how these are being managed.

### **7.7. Rural Communities**

7.7.1. There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations of this update report.

### **7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children**

7.8.1. There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations of this update report.

### **7.9. Public Health**

**7.9.1.** There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations of this update report.

**7.10. Climate Change**

**7.10.1.** There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations of this update report.

| <b>Access to Information</b> |  |
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| Contact Officer:             | Jane Burns<br>Executive Director of Corporate Services |
| Appendices:                  |  |
| Background Papers:           | Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan                   |