



Partnerships 2015-16 City of York Council Memorandum Report

For: *Acting Director of City and Environmental Services*

Status: *Final*

Date Issued: *6th September 2016*

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1 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

- 1.1 Partnerships are becoming increasingly important to the council as they can achieve beneficial outcomes for residents as well as offering value for money. However, partnership working presents risks to the council and its partners which need to be managed both at a corporate and individual partnership level.
- 1.2 A review of the council's risk management arrangements, which included partnerships, was carried out by Zurich Municipal in 2013. This review highlighted concerns relating to the risks involved with the council's partnership workings. Subsequently, an audit was undertaken by Veritau in 2013/14 which highlighted areas for improvement and a report on progress was taken to the Audit & Governance committee on 12th December 2014.
- 1.3 The audit reviewed the progress being made to date in improving the corporate governance and risk management arrangements that related to partnership working since the review which was carried out by Zurich Municipal. The audit also followed-up on the agreed actions from the 2013-14 Veritau audit.
- 1.4 The audit focused in detail on reviewing the arrangements for two key partnerships. The Without Walls partnership set out and ensured the delivery of a long-term vision for York which involved the council and other key partners such as the police and the NHS. The other arrangements that were looked at were the two Local Enterprise Partnerships that the council was involved with which aim to grow the local economy in York.
- 1.5 Discussions were held with the Programme Director - Business Consolidation and the Strategy and Policy Group Manager (Economy and Place) with documentation from the two partnerships being reviewed.

2 FINDINGS

The Council's Partnership Workings

- 2.1 There has been good progress made since the audit work that was done on the council's partnerships during 2013-14. The audit report was finalised on 15th January 2015 with an overall opinion of 'Reasonable Assurance'. There were three agreed actions which related to risk management, partnership policy and mandates.
- 2.2 Significant progress has been made to address the issues raised in the previous audit's report. There are now detailed guidance notes for partnership workings. These were reviewed during the current audit and contained the necessary details to support officers that were involved with partnership working including the partnership mandate. A copy of the guidance notes are attached to the council's website.
- 2.3 A list of the council's partnership arrangements has now been produced which contains all the council's partnerships together with the responsible officer from the council. However, this list gives 277 partnership arrangements across the council and gives no indication of either their size, importance to the council or the amount of resources committed to them. Therefore key partnerships have not been identified that would result in the council not achieving its objectives if the partnership didn't work out as expected. It was also noted that, unlike the guidance notes, the list of partnership arrangements was not on the council's website.

Without Walls

- 2.4 Without Walls was created in 2002 in order to ensure the delivery of a long-term vision for York. This vision covers the issues that affect people's lives. Without Walls is made up of people from influential organisations who work together to move the City's vision forward.
- 2.5 The Without Walls arrangements are being reviewed because the council is not obliged to do this and feels the arrangements need to be refreshed to develop joint working between the council and its partners in future. A presentation went to the Without Walls Board in November which proposed that annual conferences are staged which will then identify areas that the council can work with other local bodies to achieve common goals.
- 2.6 At the time of the audit the council was still consulting with its partners over the proposal of staging annual conferences and the format of the conferences had not been agreed. The council needs to consider how the conference would be organised to ensure that it achieves the council's objectives as well as encouraging partner organisations to participate fully. The council also needs to ensure that any joint working arrangements that are agreed with other bodies are supported by a mandate if they involve resources that are provided by the council.

Local Enterprise Partnerships

- 2.7 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are aimed at improving York's economy by working with neighbouring local authorities and other private and public sector organisations to improve infrastructure across the region. The council is involved with two LEPs, the Leeds City Regional Enterprise Partnership that includes councils in West Yorkshire as well as Selby, Harrogate and Craven and the York, North Yorkshire and East Yorkshire Enterprise Partnership which involves the councils in the name. The Government is also proposing further devolution with more powers devolved to regional bodies. The council is involved in three devolved power bids based on the two LEPs plus a combined bid.
- 2.8 The audit reviewed the governance arrangements for both LEPs which did not identify any shortcomings that would expose the council to joint working arrangements that the council does not need or want. The mandates of both LEPs were examined which confirmed that they were in sufficient detail to ensure the LEP would be managed satisfactorily for all partners involved. The LEPs also gave regular reports on the progress being made in developing the region.
- 2.9 The future of the LEPs is uncertain as they may be superseded by other plans for devolving more powers to local regional bodies. The council needs to monitor both the LEPs and other plans to devolve more powers to regional bodies to ensure that the council's priorities can be achieved in future in what is likely to be a politically sensitive issue.

3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The actions from the previous audit on Partnerships have largely been successfully followed up.
- 3.2 There is a long list of partnerships but all are listed as equal with none highlighted that are critical to achieving the council's priorities or those that involve a lot of council resources. The list is also not attached to the council's website along with the guidance documents for partnership working.
- 3.3 The proposed conference that would replace the Without Walls arrangements needs to be developed so that the council and other local organisations can identify areas of common interest that they can work together on. The council also needs to ensure that any joint working arrangements or partnerships that arise for the conference are supported by appropriate governance arrangements if the council resources are committed to them.
- 3.4 The council needs to monitor both Local Enterprise Partnerships and other plans for devolution to ensure that the arrangements continue to ensure that they help the council achieve its priorities in York.

APPENDIX 2 – ACTIONS AGREED TO ADDRESS CONTROL WEAKNESSES

Action Number	Report Reference	Issue	Risk	Agreed Action	Priority*	Responsible Officer	Timescale
1	3.2	Identifying partnerships that are critical to the council or involve a lot of resources.	The council does not achieve its objectives because key partnerships fail.	A report is being presented to the Corporate Management Team in order to update them on the progress being made with partnership working. This report will include the need to identify key partnerships that are fundamental to delivering council services.	2	Policy, Performance and Change Manager	31 st December 2016
2	3.2	List of partnership arrangements.	Council officers duplicate partnership agreements that already exist.	Once the review of partnership arrangements has been completed then a list of partnerships will be included on the intranet alongside the guidance on partnership working.	3	Policy, Performance and Change Manager	31 st December 2016

*The priorities for actions are:

- Priority 1: A fundamental system weakness, which presents unacceptable risk to the system objectives and requires urgent attention by management.
- Priority 2: A significant system weakness, whose impact or frequency presents risks to the system objectives, which needs to be addressed by management.
- Priority 3: The system objectives are not exposed to significant risk, but the issue merits attention by management.