DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNCIL

PART 10 EMPLOYEES, MANAGEMENT/STAFFING STRUCTURE, JOINT WORKING PARTNERSHIPS

Introduction to Part 10

Part 10 of the Constitution sets out the Council's Staffing Structure, the Pay Policy Statement and Joint Working Partnerships.

The Staffing Structure includes the senior management structure at director level and statutory officers.

The Pay Policy Statement is made in accordance with Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 and reviewed annually as part of the budget report, or in year, if required. The Statement sets out Dartford Borough Council's policies relating to the pay of its workforce for the financial year 2025-26.

Part 10 also sets out the criteria for Politically Restricted Posts and guidance for employees, including where this involves participation in Joint Bodies, and on the application process for exemption from, or inclusion on, the list of politically restricted posts.

In addition, Part 10 also sets out arrangements for Joint Working Partnerships. The Code of Practice for Effective Joint Working Arrangements outlines the principles of effective joint working governance, identifies why the Council enters and engages in joint working and details how joint working arrangements should be managed, supported and reviewed.

Contents

PART 10 EMPLOYEES, MANAGEMENT/STAFFING STRUCTURE, JOINT WORKING PARTNERSHIPS 1

Introduction to Part 10 2
Part 10.1 – STAFFING STRUCTURE 5
Part 10.2 - DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PAY POLICY STATEMENT 6
1. PURPOSE 6
2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK 6
3. DEFINITIONS 6
Part 10.3 - POLITICALLY RESTRICTED POSTS 14
1. Introduction 15
2. 2. Categories of politically restricted posts requiring political neutrality 16
3. 3. Exemption application process 17
4. Guidance on Section 2(3) of LGHA 1989 18
5. How to apply for an exemption 19
6. Directions to include a post in the third category 20
7. 7. APPENDIX A 22

Part 10.4 - CODE OF PRACTICE FOR EFFECTIVE JOINT WORKING ARRANGEMENTS28
1. Introduction 29
1. What is a partnership? 29
2. Benefits of working in partnership 30
3. Partnerships Register 31
4. What constitutes a 'major' and 'minor' partnership? 31
5. Assessment, evaluation, streamlining, succession planning and termination 32
6. Partnership governance arrangements 34
7. Legal basis for partnership arrangements 36
8. Risk management 37
9. Council representation on partnerships 38
10. Performance management and partnership monitoring 38
11. Financial management 39
12. Accountable Body 40
13. Lead partner 41
14. Grants 41
15. Employment and secondment of staff 41
16. Audit requirements 42
17. Document retention 42
18. Information sharing and data quality 43
19. Communication in a partnership setting 43
20. Branding and identity 43
21. Overview and scrutiny 43
22. Engagement and consultation 43
23. Role of Statutory Officers 44

24. Role of Council Officers 44
25. Councillor's role 44
26. Ethical standards 44
27. Whistleblowing and anti-fraud measures 46
28. Equality, diversity and social inclusion 46
29. Complaints and redress 46
30. Reviewing new and existing partnership arrangements 47

10.1 – STAFFING STRUCTURE

Sarah Martin - Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services

Responsible for Business Continuity, Democratic Services, Elections, Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Internal Audit, Land Charges, Legal Services, Property Information and GIS, Revenues & Benefits and Treasury Management.

Peter Dosad – Deputy Chief Executive (Housing and Public Protection)

Responsible for Bereavement Services, Climate Change & Biodiversity, Community Safety, Emergency Planning, Enforcement, Environmental Health, Housing (Landlord Function), Parking Services, Parks, Waste & Recycling and Private Sector & Strategic Housing.

Caroline Hicks – Deputy Chief Executive (Growth and Community)

Responsible for Asset Management, Building Control, Business Support, Communications, Community Development, Corporate Performance, Corporate Policy, Culture, Customer Services, Economic Development, Elders Forum, Emergency Planning, Events, Health, Land Charges, Leisure, Markets, Major Projects, Planning, Property Information/GIS and Youth Council.

Statutory Officers

Head of Paid Service - Sarah Martin

Responsible for the management of staff.

Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer – Ian Hunt (interim)

Responsible for ensuring the legality and fairness of the Council's decision-making and the promotion of ethics within the Council.

Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer – Nicola Walker

Responsible for the financial affairs of the Council.

10.2 - DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL PAY POLICY STATEMENT

2025-26

1. PURPOSE

This Pay Policy Statement is made in accordance with Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 and will be reviewed annually as part of the budget report, or in year, if required.

This Pay Policy Statement sets out Dartford Borough Council's policies relating to the pay of its workforce for the financial year 2025-26, in particular:

a) the remuneration of its Chief Officers
b) the remuneration of its "lowest paid employees"
c) the relationship between the remuneration of its Chief Officers and the remuneration of its employees who are not Chief Officers

2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

In determining the pay and remuneration of all its employees, the Council will comply with all relevant employment legislation and:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Part Time Employment (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
- The Agency Workers Regulations 2010, and where relevant
- The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006.

With regard to the equal pay requirements contained within the Equality Act 2010, the Council ensures that there is no pay discrimination within its pay structures and that all pay differentials can be objectively justified.

3. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this Pay Policy Statement, the following definitions will apply:

3.1 **"Pay"** in addition to salary includes fees, allowances, benefits in kind, increases in/enhancements to pension entitlements, and termination payments.

3.2 **"Chief Officer**" (has the meaning given in section 2 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989) and refers to the following roles within the Council:

a) Directors;
b) Statutory Officers.

3.3 **"Lowest Paid Employees"** refers to those staff employed within grade B of the Council's local pay framework.

Grade B is the lowest grade on the Council's local pay framework. Grade B (market level) and a number of cleaners and one seasonal part time worker are paid no less than the Living Wage Foundation's Living Wage.

From time to time, the Council employs apprentices or other such categories of workers, including casual workers, who are not included within the definition of 'Lowest Paid Employee' as they are employed under the Government's National Minimum Wage legislation and pay is dependent on age.

3.4 "Specified Posts" refers to the most senior staff below Directors that have high level and wide ranging responsibilities, who report to the Directors.

3.5 "Other Officers" refers to staff other than Chief Officers and includes Lowest Paid Employees and staff in Specified Posts.

3.6 "Statutory Officers" refers to the Head of Paid Service, the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.

4. PAY FRAMEWORK AND REMUNERATION LEVELS

4.1 General approach

Remuneration at all levels needs to be adequate to secure and retain highquality employees dedicated to fulfilling the Council's business objectives and delivering services to the public.

4.2 Responsibility for decisions on remuneration

It is essential for good governance that decisions on pay and reward packages for Chief Officers are made in an open and accountable way and that there is a verified and accountable process for recommending the levels of top salaries.

Salaries for Chief Officers are determined by a meeting of the General Assembly of the Council in accordance with the Council's local pay framework.

The pay grade for Other Officers is determined in accordance with the Council's Pay and Grading Policy.

The Council's local pay framework was approved by the General Assembly of the Council on 25 February 2002.

4.3 Salary grades and grading framework

Grades for Other Officers are determined by job evaluation. The Council

operates the Hay Job Evaluation Scheme, with the grade for each role being determined by a consistent job evaluation process, or an extension thereto for Specified Posts.

As part of this, the Council determines a local pay framework, from Grade B (lowest) to Grade M (highest). Each job is evaluated against the Hay Job Evaluation Scheme criteria. Each grade comprises an entry level and a market level, except for Grade B which comprises of market level only. New starters, current staff moving to a higher graded new post or whose post has been re-evaluated at a higher grade are paid at entry level and move to market level after 12 months, subject to satisfactory performance. In exceptional circumstances, the market level may be applied earlier than 12 months, subject to the approval of the Head of Paid Service.

Chief Officers are evaluated under the Council's local pay framework and these posts are paid at a specific salary (with no increments) as determined by the General Assembly of the Council. The salary of Other Officers' posts is based on the Hay Job Evaluation Scheme, or on comparables and/or external advice, and agreed by the Head of Paid Service.

Other than entry and market level, pay grades do not have any increments. Pay awards are considered annually for all staff and approved as part of the budget report considered by the General Assembly of the Council in February or March each year.

Where a mid-year increase to the Living Wage Foundation's Living Wage affects any grade in addition to Grade B Market, the Council will review the affected grade's salary to ensure that a reasonable pay differential is maintained.

5. REMUNERATION – LEVEL AND ELEMENT

5.1.1 Chief Officers

The salary and terms and conditions of employment for Chief Officers are determined by the General Assembly of the Council.

Chief Officers are subject to the same pay award (if any) as Other Officers. Irrespective of value, any severance/settlement package (including redundancy, permanent ill-health or infirmity of mind or body) proposed for Chief Officers will be referred to the General Assembly of the Council for approval.

Before attempting to reach a financial settlement, it may be appropriate to take legal advice and/or consult with the external auditor to ensure that any payment is justified and lawful. Relevant considerations will include the likelihood of a claim succeeding and the amount of compensation that could be awarded by a Court or Employment Tribunal.

5.1.2 Other Officers

The salary and terms and conditions of employment for Other Officers are determined in accordance with the Pay and Grading Policy.

The salary of Specified Posts will be determined by the Head of Paid Service in accordance with existing structures, comparables, and/or external advice.

Other Officers are subject to the same pay award (if any) of Chief Officers. Discretionary compensation for Other Officers, is approved by the Head of Paid Service.

A supplement is paid on the basic pay of the posts of Head of Legal Services and Head of Finance, to remunerate the postholders for the Statutory Officer duties, respectively, of Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer, undertaken by them.

5.1.3 New starters joining the Council

Employees new to the Council will normally be appointed to the entry grade. Where the candidate's current employment package would make the first point of the salary range unattractive (and this can be demonstrated by the applicant in relation to current earnings) or where the employee already operates at a level commensurate with a higher salary, the market grade may be payable, subject to the approval of the Head of Paid Service.

The grade and starting salary, for Chief Officers will be determined by the General Assembly of the Council. The grade for Other Officers will be determined by the Hay Job Evaluation scheme.

5.1.4 Relationship between remuneration of "Chief Officers" and "Other Officers"

For the purpose of this Pay Policy Statement, the "pay multiple" is defined as the ratio between the highest paid salary and the mean average salary of the whole workforce. In this context, salary excludes any payments made for election duties, travel expenses, and any payments made on termination of employment.

The policy of the Council is to set the pay multiple at a maximum of six.

5.1.5 Fees or Allowances

Any allowance or other payment will only be made to staff in connection with their role or the patterns of hours they work and must be in accordance with the Council's policies e.g. Expenses Policy, Overtime and Additional Payments Policy etc.

All employees at or above Grade H are entitled to subsidised medical health insurance.

Other non-contractual benefits may from time to time be offered to all employees e.g. subsidised sports membership.

5.1.6 Election Duties

The Council is required to appoint a Returning Officer to conduct these local elections on its behalf. In accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983, the cost of local elections is met by the Council.

The Council is required to place the services of its staff at the disposal of the Returning Officer to help run the election. When deciding on the fees payable, regard is had to guidance issued by the Kent Association of Electoral Administrators or similar organisations and approved by the Joint [Kent] Chief Executives. The Returning Officer has delegated authority to agree the fee levels as proposed by the relevant body and approval for this delegation will be sought each year, along with the approval of this Pay Policy Statement

The Returning Officer is personally (not corporately) responsible for the management of elections.

The fees paid to the Returning Officer for each election for which they are responsible is determined by the size of the electorate in the district, with the payment for national elections being set nationally and the payment for local elections set at county level. Where appropriate, fees for National and Regional elections and Referenda are set out and paid by central government.

5.1.7 Special Severance Payments

The Council adheres to the 'Statutory guidance on the making and disclosure of Special Severance Payments by local authorities in England.'
Special Severance Payments are payments made to employees, officeholders, workers, contractors, and others outside of statutory, contractual or other requirements when leaving employment in public service.

(a) The following types of payments are likely to constitute Special Severance Payments, see below examples:

• payments reached under a settlement agreement between the employer and employee to discontinue legal proceedings without admission of fault;
• the value of any employee benefits or allowances which are allowed to continue beyond the employee's agreed exit date;
• write-offs of any outstanding loans;
• honorarium payments;
• hardship payments;
• payments to employees for retraining related to their termination of employment.

(b) The following types of payments may constitute Special Severance

Payments, depending on the terms of the individual's contract, relevant statutory provisions, any non-statutory applicable schemes and other relevant terms and conditions:

• pay or compensation in lieu of notice where the amount of the payment is not greater than the salary due in the period of notice set out in the employee's contract;
• pension strain payments arising from employer discretions to enhance standard pension benefits (for example under LGPS1 Regulation 30(5) where the employer has waived the reduction under LGPS Regulation 30(8) or because of the award of additional pension under Regulation 31).

(c) The following types of payments do not constitute Special Severance Payments:

• statutory redundancy payments;
• contractual redundancy payments, whether applicable to voluntary or compulsory redundancy, and whether agreed by collective agreement or otherwise;
• severance payments made in accordance with the Council's policy adopted pursuant to Regulation 7 of the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006;
• a strain cost paid to the relevant LGPS administering authority under LGPS Regulation 68(2) which results from a LGPS member's retirement benefits becoming immediately payable without reduction under LGPS Regulation 30(7), or under LGPS Regulation 30(6) where the employer has waived the reduction under LGPS Regulation 30(8);
• payments for untaken annual leave;
• payments ordered by a court or tribunal or agreed as part of a judicial or non-judicial mediation;
• payments made as part of the ACAS Early Conciliation process
• payments made to compensate for injury or death of the worker
• payments made in consequence of the award of ill-health retirement benefits under Regulation 35 of the LGPS Regulations.

(d) Before agreeing to making a special severance payment, the pro forma template at Annex B will be completed to record the economic rationale for payment, compliance with the statutory guidance, minimisation of costs and the consideration of other available options.

Special Severance Payments will be approved in accordance with the following process:

• payments of £100,000 and above, by the General Assembly of the Council;
• payments of £20,000 and above, but below £100,000, to be personally

• payments below £20,000, by the Head of Paid Service.

1 Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Leader (records of approval
must be maintained);

6. PERFORMANCE RELATED PAY

The Council does not operate a scheme of performance related pay.

7. BENEFITS IN KIND

Any benefits in kind will be in accordance with any specific policy e.g. Expenses Policy and subsidised medical health insurance.

8. PENSION

All employees are eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). In line with LGPS rules, all new employees are auto enrolled on commencement of employment. The Council will not offer an alternative scheme to employees.

In certain circumstances, the Council may grant additional scheme membership. The Council's policy on employer pension discretions is included as an Annex A to this Pay Policy Statement.

Additional scheme membership for the Chief Officers is approved by the General Assembly of the Council. For Other Officers, approval is by the Head of Paid Service, except in cases where additional scheme membership would result in a severance package above £100,000. In this instance, the total severance payment will be referred to the General Assembly of the Council, in accordance with the 'Openness and accountability in local pay: Guidance under section 40 of the Localism Act 2011.'2

9. REDUNDANCY & DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS

As a local authority employer, the Council must comply with its duties under the Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employment in Local Government, etc.) (Modification) Order 1999.

In the event that an employee ceases to hold office and is eligible for a redundancy payment, such payment is determined in accordance with the Council's Redeployment and Redundancy Policy and Procedure that applies to all employees.

If an employee who is under notice of redundancy receives an offer of a job from another local authority or associated employer and accepts and starts working for the new employer within four weeks of the end of the individual's employment with the Council, there is no dismissal for redundancy payment purposes and therefore the employee is not entitled to a redundancy payment. In cases where the current contract ends on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday,

2 Supplementary Guidance February 2013before the fifth Monday following the end of the current contract.

The normal pension abatement rules that apply to all employees, will also be applied to Chief Officers in receipt of a LGPS pension.

The Council is required to have a policy for discretionary payments under the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations 2006.

The Council's policy on the discretionary payments is included as an Annex A to this Pay Policy Statement.

It is not the general policy of the Council to re-employ former employees who have received a redundancy or discretionary compensation payment on leaving. However, the Council must have flexibility to respond to operational requirements. For Other Officers, the Council will only re-employ former employees who have received a redundancy or discretionary compensation payment after approval by the Head of Paid Service. In the case of the reemployment of Chief Officers, approval would be required by the General Assembly of the Council.

10. PUBLICATION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT THE REMUNERATION OF COUNCIL EMPLOYEES

The Council publishes in its annual accounts, information relating to the remuneration of staff over a level defined by Government guidance. Responses to freedom of information requests are subject to the consideration of the Data Protection Act 2018.

11. AMENDMENTS TO THIS PAY AND POLICY STATEMENT

This Pay and Policy Statement may be amended in-year by resolution of the General Assembly of the Council.

10.3 - POLITICALLY RESTRICTED POSTS

GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEES ON THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR EXEMPTION FROM OR INCLUSION ON THE LISTS OF POLITICALLY RESTRICTED POSTS

Adopted by the Standards Committee 16 July 2009 [Min.No:39]

Amended in consultation with the Standards Committee Chairman 27.05. 2010

Amended to comply with the Localism Act 2011 provisions - 16 July 2012 [GAC Min. No. 35]
Amended under the Managing Director's delegated authority - 25 February 2019

Amended under the Strategic Director (Internal Services) delegations- 15 June 2020

Amended under the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services' delegations - 4 February 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 This guidance note applies to employees who occupy or are appointed to politically restricted posts and sets out the application process for exemption from or inclusion on the list of politically sensitive posts maintained by the Council, and the process of application for a direction on whether a post is politically restricted.

1.2 The main provisions regarding politically restricted posts are set out in Part I of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended) (the LGHA 1989). The law aims at ensuring the political impartiality of local government staff.

1.3 Employees in 'politically restricted' posts are not barred from membership of political parties but are from political activity, in particular:

(a) standing as a candidate for election to the House of Commons, the European Parliament, the Welsh Assembly or a local authority, unless the employee resigns prior to announcing his/her candidature in accordance with section 4 below;
(b) acting as an election agent or sub-agent for any candidate for election;
(c) being an officer of a political party, or a branch or committee or sub-committee of a political party, if this involves participation in the general management of the party or branch, or dealing with persons (other than members of the party or branch) as a representative of the party or branch;
(d) canvassing on behalf of a political party or any candidate for election to the House of Commons, the European Parliament, the Welsh Assembly or a local authority (not restricted to the Borough of Dartford);
(e) speaking or writing publicly (other than in an official capacity) with the intention of affecting public support for a political party (does not include the display of a poster or other document at the postholder's home or in their car or other personal possessions);
(f) becoming or remaining a member of another principle local authority;
(g) publishing any written or artistic work of which the officer is an author or editor (either solely or with others) if the work is, or appears to be, intended to affect public support for a political party.

This list is not exhaustive and is intended as a guide only. Employees seeking to become elected or to take part in political activity are advised to take independent legal advice.

1.4 The cumulative effect of the restrictions referred to above, is to limit the incumbents of politically restricted posts, to bare membership of political parties, with no active participation within the party permitted.

1.5 Whilst this guidance only applies to post holders of 'politically restricted' posts, all employees are required to observe the Employee Code of

Conduct, which requires all staff to be politically neutral in respect of their employment duties.

2. Categories of politically restricted posts requiring political neutrality

(a) The Council is required to maintain an up to date list of its politically restricted posts that fall into four categories (Appendix A). The list is open to public inspection:

- first category - posts specifically identified in the legislation - these posts are automatically subject to restrictions on political activity and, as such, there is no right to apply for an exemption from political restriction;
- second category - posts defined by their relationship to others - these posts are automatically subject to restrictions on political activity and, as such, there is no right to apply for an exemption from political restriction;
- third category – where the duties of the post have certain characteristics described in the legislation (politically sensitive posts)
  - post holders can apply to the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services to be exempted from political restriction;
- fourth category – posts, to which duties have been delegated under the Scheme of Delegations to Officers - these posts are automatically subject to restrictions on political activity and, as such, there is no right to apply for an exemption from political restriction.

(b) The third and fourth categories of posts have to be included in lists prepared and maintained by the Council. There is no requirement to keep a list of those posts deemed to be politically restricted by virtue of the first category, that do not also fall within the remit of the third category.

In practical terms, the best way for the Council to maintain clarity in respect of politically restricted posts is to annotate a full staff list to show those posts restricted by virtue of the first to fourth categories. Some posts will have more than one annotation, some will have one only and many will have none. The benefit of a list of this type is that it will greatly facilitate the role of the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services in the exemption application process (see sections 4 to 6 below).

(c) Secretarial, clerical and support staff, even if they report to the Head of Paid Service or Directors, are excluded from the second category list. They may however, be deemed to be in politically restricted posts, if their duties fall within the third category (politically sensitive posts).

2. **Terms and Conditions of Employment** – Section 1(5) LGHA 1989 states that 'the terms of appointment or conditions of employment of every person holding a politically restricted post under a local authority shall be deemed to incorporate such requirements for restricting his political activities as may be prescribed for the purposes of this subsection by regulations made by the Secretary of State.'

3. **Employees standing for election** - Notwithstanding the period of notice referred to in contracts of employment, prior to announcing their candidature for election as a member of the House of Commons, the European Parliament, the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly or any Local Authority (excluding parish/town councils), holders of politically restricted posts must, by notice in writing, addressed to their Director, Manager and the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services, resign with immediate effect. It is left to the discretion of the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services whether or not to reinstate an employee who resigns his/her post, and then consequently fights and loses an election.

   If standing for election, it is in the interests of those applying for exemption from political restriction (third category politically sensitive posts only) or applying for a direction as to whether their post is politically sensitive, to ensure that they make an application to the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services for a Certificate of Opinion (Appendix A), at least two months before they intend to stand for election.

3. Exemption application process

3.1 Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services' role

(1) The Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services will, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, consider applications from employees for exemption from political restriction or applications for a direction as to whether a post is politically sensitive, provided that the post is included in the third category list of politically sensitive posts or the Council proposes to specify the post as being politically sensitive.

(2) It is the post to which the exemption is granted, not the postholder (although in the majority of cases, the application will be made by a post holder who wants to carry out political activities).

(3) If the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, determines that the duties of the post do not fall within the remit of section 2(3) of the LGHA 1989, the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services will direct that the post is not to be regarded as politically restricted and that the post be removed from the third category list of politically sensitive posts maintained by the Council.

(4) The Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Monitoring Officer may, on application from any person, review any post not included in the third category list of politically sensitive posts. If the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services considers that the duties of the post fall within section 2(3) of LGHA 1989 and that the post is not currently included in the third category list, then the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services may issue a directive that it be included in that list.

(5) The Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services will give priority according to the time available before any election, to any application for removal from the third category list of politically sensitive posts by an employee who certifies that it is for the purpose of enabling him/her to be a candidate in a forthcoming election.

(6) The Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, will give general advice on the application of criteria for designation of a politically sensitive post.

5.2. Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services discretion

The only area over which the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services has discretion is whether or not a post falls within the parameters set out in section 2(3) LGHA 1989. Otherwise, the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services is entirely guided by legislation and/or guidance from the Secretary of State in determining whether applications for exemptions made to him should be granted – there is no scope for discretionary approvals, or for exemptions to be granted conditionally.

4. Guidance on Section 2(3) of LGHA 1989

Although adjudication of matters arising as a result of differing interpretations of section 2(3) LGHA 1989 remains the prerogative of the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services, the following guidance aims to assist the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services in his decisions as to whether or not a post is politically sensitive. The guidance is not binding on either the Council or the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services and is intended to offer assistance in decision-making without fettering the discretion of either party.

(1) Section 2(3) of LGHA 1989 (the duties' criteria'), states:

'The duties of a post under a local authority fall within this subsection if they consist in or involve one or both of the following, that is to say -

(a) giving advice on a regular basis to the authority themselves, to any committee or sub-committee of the authority or to any joint committee on which the authority are represented, or, where the authority are operating executive arrangements, to the executive of the authority, to any committee of that executive, or to any member of that executive who is also a member of the authority;

(b) speaking on behalf of the authority on a regular basis to journalists or broadcasters.'

(2) There are several questions raised by the wording of section 2(3) LGHA 1989:

(a) Is a 'post under a local authority' limited to a post held by an employee of the Council?
(b) What do the words 'consist in or involve' imply?
(c) What constitutes advice?
(d) What constitutes on a regular basis?
(e) Does advice have to be proffered to the whole authority, executive, committee, sub-committee or joint committee or to any one member of such a body?
(f) Does speaking mean giving formal presentations or does it include answering telephone queries? Would distributing a written press release constitute speaking to journalists and broadcasters?

(3) In interpreting the provisions of section 2(3) LGHA 1989, the following may be

taken into account:

(a) 'Post under a local authority' - in this context, may be taken to mean any post established by the Council, whether the incumbent is a permanent, full or part time employee, a temporary employee, a person seconded to the Council from another body or a consultant under contract to the Council.

(b) 'Consist in or involve' - in this context, may be taken to mean that either giving advice to the Council/Cabinet etc. or speaking to the media, or both, constitute a recognised part of the postholder's activities.

(c) 'Advice' - in this context, may be taken to mean information provided with the intention that it should influence:

- the policy adopted by the Council in respect of any matter properly before it;
- any strategic decisions made by or on behalf of the Council.

(d) 'Regular basis' - in this context, may be taken to mean that the activity to which it refers is:

- incorporated in the job profile for the post; or
- undertaken as an expected part of the postholder's normal duties (example postholder is required to draft reports containing advice and/or recommendations; postholder is required to attend committee meetings; postholder is required to speak at meetings);
- undertaken on more than an occasional basis, though not necessarily frequently.

(e) 'The body to whom the advice is offered' - may in this context, consist of any number of Members from one upwards, as long as the Member

or Members concerned, are acting in their official capacity as members of the Council/Cabinet or any of its committees, sub-committees or joint committees.

(f) 'Speaking' - in this context, may be taken to mean the passing of any information, whether verbally or through the written word, to a journalist or broadcaster when it is reasonable to assume that the postholder knows that the information so provided is likely to be disseminated to the public at large.

5. How to apply for an exemption

(third category- politically sensitive posts only)

The postholder may apply to the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services to be exempted from the third category list (politically sensitive posts).

(a) All applications require a letter from the postholder addressed to the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services. The application will state the title of the post, the basis upon which the post is currently deemed to be politically

sensitive and the reason why the postholder considers that political sensitivity is no longer appropriate e.g. they no longer influence policy or that the Council has incorrectly applied the duties' criteria to the post (see section 6(1) above). The application will be accompanied by a certified job profile of the post.

The Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services may provide the postholder with an opportunity to make oral representations in support of their application. The postholder may be accompanied by an accredited trade union representative or work colleague.

(b) Prior to issuing a direction in accordance with para. (c) below, the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services must consult the Monitoring Officer.

(c) The Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services will issue a direction in the form of a Certificate of Opinion (Appendix B), as to whether or not, in his opinion, the duties of the post meet the section 2(3) LGHA 1989 duties' criteria, for politically sensitive posts.

(d) If the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services directs that the duties of the post are not to be regarded as politically sensitive, the HR Business Advisor will comply with the direction and remove the post from the third category list.

(e) The postholder will be notified by the HR Business Advisor of the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services decision, within five days' of the date of the Certificate of Opinion.

(f) The decision of the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services is final. There is no right of appeal.

6. Directions to include a post in the third category list of politically sensitive posts

(1) An application may be made to the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services by the incumbents of posts or any person for a direction that a post be included in the list of politically sensitive posts.

(2) All applications require a letter addressed to the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services. The application will state the title of the post, the basis upon which the post is deemed to be politically sensitive and the reason why it is considered that political sensitivity applies. The application will be accompanied by a certified job profile of the post.

(3) In considering the application, the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services will follow the procedure detailed in section 7(b) and (c) above. The Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services may only give a direction where he determines that the post satisfies the test referred to in section 2(3) LGHA 1989 AND the post is neither referred to in the Scheme of Delegations to Officers nor listed as a politically restricted post in the first and/or second

categories (Appendix A).

(4) If the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services directs that the duties of the post are to be regarded as politically sensitive, the HR Business Advisor will comply with the direction and include the post in the third category list and the procedure in sections 7(e) and (f) will apply.

4. Applications for exemption from persons not yet in a politically sensitive post

The Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services will only consider applications for exemption from persons who have received formal job offers from the Council. Applications for exemption from persons who are applying for a Council post, but who have not received a job offer, will not be considered.

5. New employee appointments

Where new appointments are made to posts included in the third category list, the Council's letter of appointment must refer to the fact that the post is politically restricted.

6. Transferring exemptions to another local authority or post

An exemption cannot be transferred to another local authority or to another post.

1Amendments to this guidance

The Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services has delegated authority to make in-year amendments to this guidance.

7. APPENDIX A

POLITICALLY RESTRICTED POSTS

The persons holding the following posts in a substantive or acting capacity hold 'politically restricted' posts:

1. First Category - Posts specifically identified in the legislation	**Section 2(1) &(6)* LGHA 1989**
Statutory Officers	
	Post holders are 'politically restricted' with no right to apply to be exempted from political restriction.
The Head of Paid Service	**Council's designated post**
	Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services
Section 151 Officer*	**Council's designated post**
	Head of Finance
Monitoring Officer	**Council's designated post**
	Head of Legal Services

2. Second Category - Posts defined by their relationship to others	
Non-Statutory Chief Officers (i.e. Directors)	**Section 2(7) LGHA 1989**
Chief Executive (Corporate Services) Deputy Chief Executive (Housing and Public Protection) Deputy Chief Executive (Growth & Community)	Post holders are 'politically restricted' with no right to apply to be exempted from political restriction.
	An officer whose duties are solely secretarial or clerical or are otherwise in the nature of support services are not regarded as a non-statutory chief officer.
	Council's designated posts

(a) an employee for whom the Head of Paid Service is directly responsible.	
(b) an employee who, as regards all or most of his/her duties, reports directly to, or is directly accountable to, the Head of Paid Service and/or the Council, or any committee or subcommittee of the Council.	

Deputy Chief Officers (Officers reporting to Directors)	**Section 2(8) LGHA 1989**
	Post holders are 'politically restricted' with no right to apply to be exempted.
	An officer whose duties are solely secretarial or clerical or are otherwise in the nature of support services are not regarded as a deputy chief officer.
	Council's designated posts
An employee who, as regards all or most of his/her duties, reports directly to, or is directly accountable to, one or more of the non-statutory chief officers.	Business Rates Manager Community Services Manager Council Tax and Recovery Manager Economic Development and Communications Manager Electoral Services Manager Enforcement and Regulatory Services Manager Environmental Health Manager Head of Finance Head of Housing Head of IT and Transformation Head of Legal Services Head of Planning Services HR Manager *Property Services Manager* *Property Services Manager Manager* *Waste Parks Manager*

3. Third Category - Posts, whose duties have certain characteristics described in the legislation (politically sensitive posts)	**Sections 2(2)(c) & (3) LGHA 1989**
	Post holders in politically sensitive posts can apply to the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services to be exempted.
A post becomes politically sensitive, where either of the tests referred to in (a) and/or (b) below are satisfied:	The ultimate test whether an individual post is, in fact politically sensitive, will depend on the nature of the duties the post regularly undertakes.
	Council's designated posts
(a) where the duties involve giving advice on a regular basis to: • Cabinet and/or any of its committees, boards or panels; or • the General Assembly of the Council and/or its committees, boards and panels; or Joint Committees on which the Council is represented; or • any Cabinet member	[undefined] posts Graded H (market) and below. Posts Graded J (market) and above, but excluding the posts referred to in sections 1 and 2 above.
(b) where the duties involve speaking on behalf of the Council on a regular basis to journalists or broadcasters.	[undefined] posts Graded H (market) and below. Posts Graded J (market) and above, but excluding the posts referred to in sections 1 and 2 above.

4. Fourth Category - Posts to which powers and duties have been delegated	**Section 2(1)(g) & 2(2)(c) LGHA 1989**
	Post holders referred to in the Scheme of Delegations to Officers are politically restricted, with no right to apply to be exempted from political restriction.
This inclusion ensures that a person who is in a post not normally politically restricted, but who, for the time being, is exercising powers normally exercised by the holder of a politically restricted post, is regarded as being in a politically restricted post for the duration of the delegation.	*The list does not include any delegations made or in place for a duration not exceeding six months.*
	Council's designated posts
	Officers exercising delegated powers, i.e. persons whose posts are for the time being specified by the General Assembly of the Council and/or Cabinet in a the Scheme of Delegations To Officers maintained in accordance with section 100G(2) of the Local Government Act 1972 and section 15 of the Local Government Act 2000.

APPENDIX B

Politically Restricted Posts

CERTIFICATE OF OPINION FOR THIRD CATEGORY - POLITICALLY SENSITIVE POSTS

DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING ACT 1989 (as amended)

Sensitive posts are ones which meet one or both of the following Section 2(3) LGHA 1989 duties' related criteria:

(a) where the officer is involved in giving advice on a regular basis to:

- Cabinet and/or any of its committees, boards or panels; or
- the General Assembly of the Council and/or its committees, boards and panels; or
- Joint Committees on which the Council is represented; or
- any Cabinet member; or

(b) speaks on behalf of the Council on a regular basis to journalists or broadcasters.

Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Services - Statement

This is to certify that it is Dartford Borough Council's opinion that the duties of the under mentioned post:

(Please tick appropriate box)

do fall within Section 2(3) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ☐

do not fall within Section 2(3) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ☐

Postholder's salary: £ Grade

Job Profile (please attach)

It is a requirement that the job profile contains adequate information. For filled posts, the information provided needs to show to what extent, over the past twelve months, the postholder has advised the General Assembly of the Council/Cabinet, its committees or sub-committees, or joint committees or a Cabinet member and/or spoken regularly for Dartford Borough Council, to journalists and broadcasters.

For new posts, it will be necessary to state to what degree it is anticipated the postholder will be carrying out the duties as outlined above.

Name: Signature

Date:

10.4 - CODE OF PRACTICE FOR EFFECTIVE JOINT WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Amended by authority of the GAC [16 July 2012 Min.No.35]

Amended under the Managing Director's delegated authority 16.12.13

Amended under the Managing Director's delegated authority 14.04.14

Amended under the Managing Director's delegated authority 25.01.16

Amended under the Managing Director's delegated authority 08.08.18

Amended under the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services' delegated authority 06.09.2021

Amended under the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services' delegated authority 19 August 2022

Amended under the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services' delegated authority 15 August 2023

Amended under the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services' delegated authority 6 August 2024

Amended under the Chief Officer & Director of Corporate Services' delegated authority 11 August 2025

Amended under the Chief Executive's delegated authority 20 October 2026

1. Introduction

1.1 Joint working is playing an increasingly important role in public sector service delivery. The Council is fully committed to joint working because it recognises the strength and value of effective joint working arrangements in contributing to the improvement of the well-being of the Borough's communities. The Council encourages joint working wherever benefits can be demonstrated.

1.2 The benefits of effective joint working include making service users the focus of planning, commissioning and delivering services. Joint working has the potential to deliver value for money through ensuring available resources are used economically, efficiently and effectively. It can also lead to added value by achieving something more than the Council could do by working alone.

1.3 The Council's corporate governance (i.e. the framework of accountability to users, stakeholders and the wider community within which the Council takes decisions and meets and controls its functions to achieve its objectives), supports joint working.

1.4 Given the significant increase in joint working and the subsequent increases in formalised joint working arrangements, this Code and the supporting Toolkit have been developed to ensure that where the Council enters into joint working arrangements, it will do so with sound governance in place, but within a flexible, efficient and robust approach to such an arrangement.

1.5 This Code:

- outlines the principles of effective joint working governance;
- identifies why the Council enters and engages in joint working;
- details how joint working arrangements should be managed, supported and reviewed.

The supporting Toolkit ensures that for each partnership:

- the Council is clear about its purpose and expected outcomes;
- the Council's own agreed priorities and objectives are being met;
- there is clarity about accountability and responsibility for outcomes;
- partnership activity and outcomes are monitored, reviewed and evaluated to make best use of resources;
- risks for the Council, and for the partnership, are assessed and agreed;
- each partnership maintains a relevance to its agreed purpose during its lifespan and has in place an effective exit strategy;
- reviews are undertaken to evaluate success and further challenge progress and improve governance.

1.6 Sharing this Code with prospective partners may prove useful in developing joint working arrangements.

1.6 For the purposes of this Code, the term 'partnership' is to be interpreted in different ways – the term is to be used interchangeably with collaboration, coalition, shared services and joint working.

2. What is a partnership?

2.1 The term partnership can encompass a wide range of collaborative arrangements. A partnership is a joint working arrangement where the partners:

2.1.1 are otherwise independent bodies;
2.1.2 agree to co - operate to achieve a common goal;
2.1.3 create an organisational structure or process to achieve the partnership's outcomes;
2.1.4 plan and implement a jointly agreed programme, often with joint staff and/or resources;
2.1.5 share relevant information and pool risks and rewards.

2.2 Partnerships vary in size, service area, membership and function. This Code covers all those partnerships in which the Council is involved where the partners have been charged with developing specific strategies or plans and are 'held to account' for the delivery of those strategies or plans. In addition, these partnerships might also be responsible for delivering key initiatives to realise improvements in quality of life outcomes and might also come under some form of audit/inspection regime. This Code applies equally to Government initiated 'statutory' partnerships as well as nationally required and/or locally determined 'non-statutory' partnerships. It does not cover contractual/joint committees.

2.3 It is important to note that this Code does not cover every partnership - the following list provides examples of arrangements, which are not covered:

- goods, services and works contracts (contractual arrangements)
- partnering agreements (contractual arrangement)
- partnership frameworks (select list);
- community partnerships (involving funding);
- joint strategy partnerships (no formal contract but joint objectives to deliver);
- regeneration/highways partnerships to deliver joint objectives (no formal contract);
- accountable body relationships;
- commissioning partnerships (contractual arrangement);
- LSP and commissioning bodies for LAAs;
- Regional/sub-regional partnerships;
- Strategic service partner (contractual arrangement);
- PPP/PFI and joint ventures (contractual arrangement);
- service level agreements;
- appointments and/or financial commitments to outside bodies, where the Council has no strategic or policy function (e.g. where the Council provides grants and requires a place on the outside body's board);
- consultative groups;
- 'commercial partnerships' with a view to making a profit, which are subject to the Partnership Act 1890;
- joint committees;
- joint waste authorities.

3. Benefits of working in partnership

Partnerships should, ultimately, improve the quality of services being provided to Dartford's citizens and should achieve outcomes for communities which individual agencies/bodies may not be able to achieve on their own. Partnerships should have one or more of the following aims:

- improve service delivery through better co – ordination, especially where services are provided by a range of organisations;
- improve the quality of people's lives;

- tackle complex and county-wide issues;
- facilitate and increase community engagement through improved information, consultation and participation;
- through community engagement, help to ensure that services are developed in alignment with customers' needs;
- stimulate more creative approaches to problems by bringing together people with different backgrounds, skills and assumptions and sharing risks and rewards more widely;
- wield greater influence than individual partners could achieve, thus enhancing the impact on other parties;
- tackle complex cross-cutting issues;
- reduce waste and/or duplication, pool resources and improve economies of scale;
- gain access to new resources;
- meet statutory or organisational requirements; and
- provide opportunities for learning from people in different organisations and with different perspectives.

4. Partnerships Register

(i) The Chief Executive maintains an overview of the Partnerships Register which is a comprehensive record of the Council's involvement in all 'major' and 'minor' partnerships. All 'major' and 'minor' partnerships must be recorded in the Partnerships Register. The Register should be updated, following review of partnership arrangements.

(ii) The purpose of the Partnerships Register is:
- to allow the Council to monitor and evaluate its involvement in partnerships and identify potential risks and benefits;
- to ensure that the partnerships it is engaged in, contribute to the Council's strategic priorities;
- to ensure the partnerships align to quality of life outcomes;
- to be a valuable reference point, when entering into new partnership initiatives;
- to reduce the risk of duplication;
- to ensure that appropriate reporting procedures are in place; and
- to enable the Leadership Team to advise and guide on training for Members and Officers.

5. What constitutes a 'major' and 'minor' partnership?

(i) The Council enters into many partnership arrangements. However, partnerships do not all carry the same level of significance and/or risk. The Council's partnership arrangements are categorised as either 'major' or 'minor'.

(ii) 'The Council defines a 'major' partnership as one that:

- develops policy and manages resources which have an impact on the ability of the Council and other public sector organisations to deliver statutory services or duties;
- assists the Council and partners to identify and deliver high level strategic priorities for the Borough;
- assists in enhancing community engagement through the Council's community leadership role;
- assists in base planning and provision on holistic themes affecting the Borough, such as community safety, the physical and economic environment, health etc;
- attracts significant additional resources e.g. through government regeneration funding streams;
- pools resources or purchasing power to increase efficiency and effectiveness;

- assists in delivering value for money in relation to economy, efficiency and effectiveness i.e. achieving equal or better outcomes for less expenditure;
- has a high public profile;
- is charged with developing specific strategies;
- is 'held to account' for the delivery of strategies or plans;
- is responsible for delivering key initiatives;
- comes under some form of audit/inspection regime;
- requires more stringent governance arrangements.

(iii) A 'minor' partnership will considered to be all other partnerships falling outside the definition of 'major' partnerships in (ii) above.

(iv) The 'major' and 'minor' partnerships are listed respectively, in sections 4.2 and 4.3 of Part 3 to the Council's Constitution. Partnerships may be re-categorised at any time, to reflect complicated or high-risk or other changing circumstances.

(v) The Council's decision-making framework for approving the entering into a partnership arrangement is detailed in the Scheme of Delegations to Officers and/or Terms of Reference. Terms of Reference in Part 3 of the Constitution define the roles and responsibilities of the Council, Cabinet, Committees, Boards and Panels. Part 3 also contains the Scheme of Delegations to Officers. Reference should be made to the Scheme of Delegations to Officers and/or Terms of Reference to establish what level of decision making is appropriate for the type, nature and significance of any individual partnership proposed to be entered into.

(vi) Partnership arrangements for 'major' and 'minor' partnerships should be reviewed annually as part of the annual review of the Partnerships Register.

6. Assessment, evaluation, streamlining, succession planning and termination

(i) Successful partnerships are characterised by a shared vision or purpose, where all partners agree to modify their own activities and resources to achieve the overall partnership goal within new working arrangements.

Assessment

(ii) Before entering into any partnership arrangement, the Council should consider whether it is in a position to contribute effectively to the partnership. The Council should be mindful of the resource implications, particularly for staff, finance and operational assets, existing commitments, and its corporate priorities, in taking decisions on new partnerships and in extending existing partnerships.

When developing any new partnership arrangement, the following factors should be considered:

- does the partnership contribute to the Council's purposes?
- does the partnership contribute to corporate priorities and objectives and help to achieve value for money?
- does the Council need to be involved?
- could another partnership provide either the same or similar function?
- does the partnership have clear terms of reference?

- is there an engagement and exit strategy?
- is it a group with a specific task and a time limit?

(iii) It is important to recognise that the establishment of some forms of partnerships, especially those with contractual or budget pooling characteristics, may need to be underpinned by a procurement process, as set out in the Council's Contracts Standing Orders. Where it is deemed beneficial to work in partnership with private contractors in order to deliver improved services, works or goods, forms of incentive can be incorporated into the contractual relationship. Often, this is referred to as 'partnership working' which covers the manner in which the client and contractor relate to each other and is about processes and behaviours which are in place, once the procurement process to appoint the contractor has been completed. As such, the spirit of this Code may help shape those arrangements.

Evaluation

(iv) In entering into a 'major' partnership arrangement, the Council should consider, together with other partners, the lifespan of the partnership and the need to regularly review the purposes and membership of the partnership, to ensure it stays focussed on its purpose and remains relevant. The Council should also regularly review the continuing relevance of the partnership against its [the Council's] corporate priorities, particularly to ensure best use of resources etc.

(v) As part of the annual review of the Partnerships Register, the Officer leading on each partnership arrangement should evaluate the partnership to assess the risks and rewards to the Council and local communities, including assessing the suitability of partners, legal issues, standards of financial regularity or conduct, insurance, issues of partnership procurement and whether the benefits from the partnership are likely to justify the costs involved in membership.

(vi) A rigorous assessment of the risks and benefits involved can lead to one of the following decisions:

- withdraw from the partnership;
- allow another body to represent the Council's interests;
- set a time limit for involvement;
- remain involved; or
- remain involved, but at a different level e.g. as a watching brief or attendance when the agenda is relevant to the Council.

(vii) Partnership arrangements are referred to in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance. Partnerships must adhere to the Code of Corporate Governance in the absence of any statutory or other alternative provisions relating to them. Depending upon their nature, circumstances and size, the Code of Corporate Governance will be applied consistently but proportionately, to partnership arrangements.

(viii) The risks attached to partnerships and the links between corporate and partnership activities is considered in the Council's Annual Governance Statement and internal control issues highlighted if partnerships' activities fall into one or more of the following categories:

- the issue has seriously prejudiced or prevented achievement of a principal objective;
- the issue has resulted in a need to seek additional funding to allow it to be resolved or has resulted in significant diversion of resources from another part of the partnership;
- the issue has led to a material impact on the accounts;
- the Section 151 Officer has reported on it as significant in the annual opinion on the internal control environment;

- the issue or its impact, has attracted significant public interest or has seriously damaged the reputation of the partnership; or
- the issue has resulted in formal action being taken by the Section 151 Officer and/or Monitoring Officer.

(ix) Partnerships can often be set up as a result of central government initiatives and funding is usually by way of a grant for, say three or four years. Upon cessation of grant funding, the government may expect agencies to mainstream these services into their normal day-to-day business. Therefore, the Council should be fully aware of any potential funding shortfalls. If the partnership has a short life span based on available funding, it should not be led to expect that the Council will continue to match the costs in order to maintain the work, if this is not possible.

Succession planning

(x) Many partnerships will reach a point where their purpose is complete, where alternative arrangements are needed, or where the need for the partnership is redundant. The Council should seek to ensure that succession strategies are in place or developed for such eventualities and/or to address sustainability issues e.g. different partners may be needed for different stages of any scheme/initiative/programme.

Termination

(xi) The Council should ensure that exit strategies are in place, for situations where it wishes to withdraw from a partnership for corporate and/or strategic reasons etc.

(xiii) A decision to terminate partnership arrangements may be based on one or more reasons, which include:

- not delivering the outputs and outcomes it was set up to do;;
- need to be combined with another partnership;
- change in circumstances or priorities;
- floundering with no clear direction;
- adverse level of risk of continuing the partnership is identified;
- external funding sources cease;
- has achieved its goals and is no longer needed in that particular form.

7. Partnership governance arrangements

(i) The different roles that the Council can play in partnerships needs to be understood. Which role the Council plays can have a significant impact on the responsibilities and liabilities of the Council.

(ii) Partners need to bring clarity to the governance of their collaboration. This requires agreement among them about purpose, membership and accountability. Partners should be clear whose interests they represent and how they will handle disputes.

(iii) A one size fits all approach to governance is inappropriate in partnership working. Governance arrangements must be proportionate to the risks involved. The governance of partnerships should promote good internal accountability between partners and better external accountability to service users.

(iv) No single form of governing document is appropriate for all kinds of partnership. Each partnership must decide for itself what it needs, taking due account of any legal requirements. Each governing document must set out its main procedures clearly and unambiguously.

(v) 'Major' partnership arrangements should have a governing document or partnership agreement, but this does not need to be overly complex or anticipate every eventuality. In the absence of formal governance arrangements, responsibility for supporting the governance of a partnership, falls to partners' own corporate governance mechanisms.

(vi) The resulting partnership agreement may comprise a short document or something more substantial, depending on the nature of the partnership in question and the complexity of the issues raised by it.

In addition, where a procurement exercise is required to select a partner, then specific forms of contract developed for the purpose of partnership working, should be considered. Refer to the Council's standard suite of procurement documents on VOX.

(vii)'Minor' partnerships should, as a minimum, have the following elements referred to in their governance arrangements:

- partnership's name;
- duration of partnership;
- aims and objectives;
- lead partner;
- accountable body;
- membership, including status of different members and termination of membership, schemes of delegation;
- powers;
- roles;
- income/expenditure;
- meetings; notice and frequency of meetings; quorum rules; chairing arrangements; voting arrangements; and representation of other members;
- decision-making processes (scope and timescales);
- minutes;
- confidentiality;
- amendments to partnership's governance;
- insurance and risk sharing provisions;
- business continuity arrangements;
- risk management arrangements;
- insurance arrangements;
- data protection and freedom of information;
- complaints and redress;
- conduct provisions;
- performance monitoring; and
- exit strategy/arrangements for dissolution.

(viii) The Council should have the following arrangements in place for 'major' partnerships and these should be considered as part of the annual review of the Partnerships Register:

- review of their financial performance in respect to adherence to budgets and any other financial targets;
- review of delivery of the partnership's objectives (performance management backed up by reliable, high quality performance data);
- review of outputs (to ensure that the partnership represents value for money);

- review of the adequacy of reporting arrangements to the partners.

The work and achievements of some of the Council's partnerships are also reviewed by the Council's various committees. For example, the Dartford Community Safety Partnership is reviewed by the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee.

(ix) Throughout the planning and implementation stages of 'major' partnership arrangements, careful consideration should be given to limiting potential liabilities for the Council. Examples of liabilities include infringements of legislation by staff or members of the partnership, contraventions of HM Revenue and Customs rules by paying staff from petty cash, personal liability of Officers and Members and the requirement for the Council to indemnify against any actions of a partner (or partnership).

8. Legal basis for partnership arrangements

(i) Partnerships are often between local authorities, but can include NHS Trusts, transport companies or other private enterprises. Grants may cover capital costs, running costs, or both. The partnership will generally not be a separate legal entity. As a result, the partnership's working relationships and the governance arrangements are reflected in a partnership agreement or other protocol.

(ii) A separate legal entity is established when the partners decide to deliver a project via a corporate body such as a company limited by guarantee, or formal partnership. The requirements of the Companies Act 1985 and the Charities Act 2006 may need to be considered.

(iii) Various legal powers for statutory and non-statutory partnerships are outlined below. This list is merely illustrative and not exhaustive:

- Crime and Disorder Act 1998 – community safety and crime prevention – community safety partnerships;
- Local Government Act 1972 (s111[1]) - subsidiary powers for a local authority to do anything, including incurring expenditure, borrowing or lending money or acquiring or disposing of any property or rights, which helps it to discharge its functions;
- Local Government Act 1972 (s113) – power to enter into an agreement with another local authority for the placing at the disposal of the latter, for the purposes of their functions on such terms as may be provided by the agreement, of the services of officers employed by the former;
- Local Government Act 1999 (s3) - places a duty of best value on local authorities to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which they exercise their functions, taking account of economy, efficiency and effectiveness;
- Local Government Act 2003 – trading and charging powers;
- Children Act 2004 – planning and commissioning of services through partnership arrangements between local authorities and key agencies;
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004 – support and delivery of civil contingency, through partnership arrangements between county councils and district councils;

[1] Because of the restrictive interpretation adopted by the courts, the operation of this provision has its difficulties - further, with the general power of competence [Localism Act 2011l], and the trading and charging powers (LGA 2003), reliance upon Section 111 is likely to be minimal

- Localism Act 2011 – general power of competence (GPoC) (see explanation in (iv) below).

(iv) The GPoC is generally seen as a 'topping up' power but with limitations on local authorities' powers. The 'general public law constraints' such as the specific financial safeguards put in place/monitored by the s.151 officer, the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, the duty to balance the budget annually (Part 2 of the Local Government Act 2003) and the prudential borrowing code (under Part 1 of the same Act) continue to apply. Where prior legislation contains a specific prohibition, it cannot be overcome by the GPoC.

(v) The Officer responsible for the partnership arrangements should consider whether authority/approval is required to enter into a partnership arrangement[2]: consider whether this authority should be granted by the General Assembly of the Council (GAC) or Cabinet, or whether authority to enter into the arrangements has been delegated to Officers under the Scheme of Delegations to Officers.

9. Risk management

(i) Effective risk management is a 'discipline for dealing with uncertainty' and is one of the principle elements of good corporate governance, concerned with both the positive and negative aspects of risk and comprises a framework and process to enable a partnership to manage uncertainty in a systematic, effective and efficient way.

(ii) There may be organisational risks regarding partnership activities (strategic) as well as risks in the partnership itself (operational) and it is important that both types of risk are understood and managed.

(iii) Prior to deciding to enter into a partnership, the risks to the Council should be considered and any risk mitigations required should be clearly understood by all involved in the process. This approach is particularly relevant when the Council is:

- the lead authority;
- working directly with partner organisations (agreeing contracts, service level agreements, managing/monitoring performance or working together to deliver services);
- serving on partnership boards or management teams.

(iv) If the Council is not the lead body, the Officer leading on the partnership arrangements, should ensure that minimum standards of risk management are in place.

(v) Risks should be understood and evaluated at all stages of 'major' partnership development and during the life of the partnership.

(vi) When the decision to enter into a 'major' partnership has been made, the relevant Director should ensure that the partnership's governance arrangements include effective management of risk and that the risks associated with the partnership are recorded on the Council's Risk Management Register.

[2] Authority/approval to enter into partnership arrangements is separate and distinct to delegated authority to execute/sign the partnership agreement

10. Council representation on partnerships

(i) Care should be taken to ensure that the Council is represented at an appropriate level, i.e. by a Councillor and/or an Officer. Representation will depend upon the role to be fulfilled. It may be appropriate for the partnership to have two levels of representation: a strategic level involving Councillors and an operational level, involving Officers.

(ii) Councillors and Officers involved in partnership arrangements must bear in mind that acceptance of a role as a charity trustee or company director (even if accepted as part of their work for the Council), is a responsibility personal to them. There will be responsibilities to the Charity Commission and/or company law, which must be fulfilled. Under charity and/or company law, a trustee's/director's first duty is to the charity/company, which may give rise to a conflict of interest between the work of the charity/company and the Council.

(iii) The Council may be represented on any agreed partnership by named Councillors and/or Officers.

(iv) Councillor and Officer representatives will at all times, abide by their respective Codes of Conduct.

(v) The terms of reference for Council representatives is as follows:

- act on behalf of the Council within specified parameters;
- ensure activities are co-ordinated across the Council to meet the Council's commitments to the partnership;
- seek agreement from the Cabinet/GAC, for any new resources not already agreed or budgeted.

(vi) Councillor representatives on a partnership have no mandate to sign any contracts or enter into any binding obligations on behalf of the Council. Only duly authorised Council Officers have power to sign documents of this nature, under the Council's Scheme of Delegations to Officers. Councillor and Officer representatives on a partnership will not provide financial, technical, or legal advice to the partnership. The partnership should satisfy itself that such advice is independently available and ensure that it arranges indemnity insurance as appropriate, details of which should be provided to Financial Services.

11. Performance management and partnership monitoring

(i) Establishing a means of reviewing how well partnerships help to achieve statutory and/or corporate objectives and identifying what resources are committed to partnership working or of evaluating the costs and benefits from working in partnership, are particularly important.

(ii) Performance management across the Council's partnerships includes:

- monitoring of use and management of resources, changes in priorities, inputs, outputs and outcomes through Pentana (the Council's performance management system), thereby ensuring that the continuing effectiveness of the partnership is properly, consistently and corporately monitored and reviewed;
- target setting through the continuous performance review system for staff;
- use of SMART action plans, targets and local and national indicators;
- overview and scrutiny of partnerships;

- links between priorities, objectives and targets through the Corporate Plan and Service Plans.

(iii) As part of the review of the Partnerships Register, the Leadership Team conducts an annual review of the appropriateness of Officer representation on partnerships to ensure that the Council is represented by the right person at any given time, matching skills with needs. Councillor representation on partnerships is reviewed at the Annual Meeting, or, in year, by the Cabinet or the GAC.

(iv) Partnership governance and activity is the responsibility of Directors, with particular emphasis on:

- ensuring that partnerships are supported by suitably skilled Officers of sufficient number so that partnerships' aims and objectives can be delivered successfully;
- recommending key targets and milestones and ensuring effective project management at all times;
- ensuring that good practice standards on governance and accountability are followed and reporting on any breach of standards;
- assessing and reporting on any slippage or new risks arising;
- agreeing and regularly reviewing protocols and governing documents with all partners;
- telling service users and the wider public about how key partnerships work, where responsibility and accountability lies and how redress can be obtained through joint complaints' procedures;
- reviewing partnerships at regular intervals to strengthen accountability, manage risks, rationalise working arrangements and ensure that they are effectively meeting the purposes for which they were created;
- taking hard decisions to scale down involvement in the partnership, if the costs outweigh the benefits, or if the added risks cannot be managed properly;
- ensuring, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, the maintenance of high ethical standards;
- arranging for the assessment and development of the skills of Councillor and Officer representatives and providing suitable training to ensure all roles can be carried out effectively;
- reviewing governing documents regularly and where necessary, seeking amendment.

12. Financial management

(i) Generally, if no finance is directly involved then, in most circumstances, this section of the Code may be dispensed with. However, if there is the possibility of Council funds, services and/or other resources being committed to the partnership, then the implications of this must be considered e.g:

- ensure budget implications and formal approval to incur expenditure against the commitment;
- ensure budget monitoring arrangements and reporting are agreed; and
- ensure the partnership arrangements establish a mechanism for dealing with overspends and underspends.

(ii) Effective stewardship of public resources is as important in partnerships as in corporate bodies, where numerous controls promote accountability and prevent fraud and mismanagement.

(iii) The principal governance issues in financial management are:

a. establishing adequate systems of financial control and monitoring within partnerships;
b. setting strategic direction for some partnerships where the availability of resources drives the agenda rather than community needs;
c. ensuring that there are sufficient financial and human resources to enable the partnership to operate effectively.

(iv) Where a partnership requires a financial commitment from the Council, the following should be satisfied and agreed by the Section 151 Officer (or nominee):

- Budget availability to fund partnership commitment;
- Pending approvals within the partnership;
- Budget monitoring arrangements;
- Arrangements to deal with over/under spends;
- VAT arrangements;
- Documentation retention in respect of external inspections.

(v) VAT is a complicated area and advice must be sought from Financial Services. Without proper adherence to VAT legislation, the partnership may find that its funding is less then expected and if VAT rules are not followed, this may result in the payment of interest and penalties.

13. Accountable Body

(i) Accountable Body status can only be granted to an entity which:
- is a 'legal personality' e.g. a company registered at Companies House or a local authority;
- has been nominated to act on behalf of the partnership;
- is capable of meeting legal obligations.

(ii) An Accountable Body may be the partnership itself (if it has formed a company limited by guarantee), or one of the members of the partnership, acting on behalf of the other partners.

(iii) Where projects are funded by grants, the funding body normally requires that one of the partners takes on the role of Accountable Body.

(iv) If the Council takes on the role of Accountable Body, it 'cash flows' or 'bankrolls' the project, pending receipt of the grant. This represents a risk to the Council in the event of the project incurring costs, which are not reclaimable from the grant funding body.

(v) The Accountable Body's role is to act on the partnership's decisions. In addition, the Accountable Body may be required to:

- administer and take responsibility for funding (e.g. ensuring structured financial procedures);
- provide resources (e.g. staff facilities) to carry out the obligations of the partnership;
- ensure that the grant allocated is spent in accordance with the grant funding body's conditions and the agreed partnership plan;
- establish and maintain effective systems for auditing and monitoring partnership spend.

(vi) In principle, the Council may consider being the Accountable Body, subject to a risk assessment of the responsibilities applying to being an Accountable Body and prior approval of the Section 151 Officer (or nominee).

14. Lead partner

(i) From the outset, it will be essential to consider who is to become the lead partner. This is particularly important with regard to financial matters. Even with shared spending decisions, a lead partner must be nominated. The lead partner will be responsible for the day-to-day accounting functions, including the production of the appropriate financial statements. It should be noted that the lead partner is not necessarily the Accountable Body.

(ii) As lead authority in a partnership arrangement, the Council must ensure compliance with the requirements of grant funding bodies.

15. Grants

(i) Quite often, grants form the main funding for partnership arrangements and the terms and conditions of those grants, including document retention, must be clear.

(ii) It is important also, to consider who is to become the Accountable Body (section 12 above) and the possibility of mainstreaming the service, should the service continue beyond the grant funding period. It is also necessary to avoid the potential claw back of any grant monies.

(iii) Invariably, partnership arrangements are often set up as a result of government initiatives, and funding is usually by way of a grant for, say, three or four years. Upon cessation of the grant, government often expects local authorities or other organisations to mainstream these projects (if evaluation indicates successful outcomes) into its normal day-to-day business. The Council must be fully aware, therefore, of any potential funding shortfalls, loss of assets, etc.

16. Employment and secondment of staff

(i) When employing staff both part-time and full-time, there are many issues, which need to be handled carefully. It is therefore essential that Human Resources is consulted at the outset.

(ii) When a partnership (which is not a legal entity) 'employs' staff, one partner should act as the 'employer'. This should be detailed in the partnership agreement and confirmation should be obtained from the 'employer' that their insurances extend to cover the actions of the 'employee' in connection with the partnership.

(iii) Where the Council is to be the 'employer', then the Council's Human Resources policies and procedures must be followed (e.g. recruitment and selection) and the 'employee' will be required to comply with the Council's policies and procedures.

(iv) Where Council staff are deemed as an 'in-kind contribution' from the Council to the partnership (which is not a legal entity) and to those contributing as part of their duties, a clear agreement needs to be drawn up between the Council and the partnership, clarifying the line management arrangements and the services to be provided by Council staff.

(v) In the case of volunteers, a lead organisation or body must be appointed to take responsibility for matters such as insurance, training and support, as well as being overall legally responsible for the activities and management of any volunteers.

(vi) Security checks with the Criminal Records Bureau must be carried out by the 'lead employer', where employed and volunteer staff work with children and vulnerable adults and appropriate safeguarding policies must be in place.

(vii) In the case of seconding staff to the partnership, a clear agreement must be drawn up between partner organisations. Secondment agreements can be complex and give rise to liabilities – advice must be sought from Human Resources in the first instance.

17. Audit requirements

The partnership arrangements must provide both internal and external auditors with full rights of access to documents. The following wording is suggested:

'The Council's auditors (external and internal) may conduct audits at any time in accordance with any relevant statutory powers. The partnership will ensure that auditors are given access at all reasonable times to premises, personnel, documents and assets, which the auditors consider necessary for the purposes of their work.

The partnership will ensure that auditors are provided with any information and explanations that they seek in the course of their work.

The Council will use its reasonable endeavours to ensure that the conduct of any audit does not unreasonably disrupt the partnership or delay the provision of its services.'

18. Document retention

Responsibility for holding documents must be agreed between the partners and for that party to be aware of the legal requirements for retention. Responsibility for the ownership of documents at the end of the partnership, must also be agreed.

19. Information sharing and data quality

(i) Information is an asset and it is important that responsibility for information is assigned and appropriate controls are put in place. This section of the Code only applies to partnership arrangements, which involve the sharing, storing, generating, analysing or collecting of information.

(ii) The Data Protection Officer provides guidance on legal compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR (derived from the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679)) and information sharing arrangements.

(iii) The Head of Legal Services provides guidance on legal compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and copyright.

(iv) The Chief Executive is the Senior Information Risk Officer and in consultation with the Head of IT and Transformation, provides guidance on:

- software licensing, databases;
- records management - creating an inventory, managing the lifecycle of records from creation to disposal;
- security - classification of information including risk management, business continuity; and
- the Council's ICT Technical Strategy.

(v) Officers should ensure that before sharing personal information with partner organisations in Kent & Medway, that they are signatories to the Kent & Medway Information Sharing Agreement. Sharing must comply with the Agreement. Entering into other information sharing agreements with partner organisations outside Kent & Medway, or with national organisations is acceptable, providing every effort is made, to ensure, so far as practicable, that those agreements do not conflict with the requirements of the Kent & Medway Information Sharing Agreement.

20. Communication in a partnership setting

(i) All partners should have a role in communicating and implementing partnership plans. Good communication of decisions and actions is required for the partnership to succeed. It should also be clear what information is available to whom and when, through the life of the partnership.

(ii) The Council should endeavour to ensure that any consultation programmes and publicity exercises for the Council, its partnerships and its partners are co-ordinated as effectively as possible. The Council is committed to ensuring that when it communicates (either directly or through partnerships), this communication is appropriate, professional and done in a way that represents value for money.

(iii) Advice should be sought from the Council's Head of Economic Development & Communications on marketing, press releases and other media issues.

21. Branding and identity

(i) The Council's brand of creativity and innovation should be embedded into all partnership work. Promotion of how the partnership is contributing to the overall Council brand should be considered and used as appropriate.

(ii) Some partnerships require a new identity to establish it as separate from the organisations within it. If this is the case, then the Council's established identity elements of font, colours and logo should be used. More information is available from the Head of Economic Development & Communications.

22. Overview and scrutiny

The Council's overview and scrutiny committees (Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Committee) as appropriate, may, within their Terms of Reference and Protocols, undertake scrutiny/review of partnership arrangements. The law requires Community Safety Partnerships and NHS partners to co-operate with the overview and scrutiny process.

23. Engagement and consultation

(i) The Council has a statutory duty to consult on specific areas of service delivery and is committed to extending its consultation beyond any statutory requirements. The Council has adopted a Consultation and Engagement Strategy, which sets out the principles of community engagement.

(ii) A key objective to an inclusive community focused framework is initially to build community capacity to participate in partnership working and then to continue to develop capacity to assist in delivering outcomes, for example:

- good levels of contact and contribution from all parts of the local community;
- increase in the level of community involvement to a point where the community leads the partnership and the statutory and voluntary bodies respond to the emerging needs;
- partners pooling budgets and resources to communicate with the wider public;
- carrying out a wide ranging consultation as the basis for planning partnership working;
- using area-based approaches as a vehicle for consultation with the wider community to inform the overall strategic approach.

24. Role of Statutory Officers

The Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer within their respective areas of responsibility, ensure that partnership arrangements are robust and integrated within the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

25. Role of Council Officers

(i) Council Officers involved in partnership working must:

- follow the procedures outlined in this Code in the review and development of partnership working initiatives;
- ensure that details held on the Partnerships Register are accurate and up-to-date;
- comply with agreed reporting procedures;
- be fully aware of Council procedures before any decisions are made;
- where applicable – relay information to service areas – always ask who needs to know.

(ii) Council Officers should remember that when working with a partnership, they remain employees of and accountable to the Council and are bound by their contract of employment, Council policies and procedures, Code of Conduct, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders. Officers should actively encourage the partnership to follow similar practices and procedures and should immediately report to their Director, when they feel that the partnership is not acting in a manner acceptable to the Council or in the public interest.

26. Councillor's role

(i) Service on outside bodies has always been an established part of a Councillor's role. Councillors play a vital community leadership and representational role in communicating local views to key public and private organisations and in influencing decision making. An appointed Member on an outside body will be able to use their knowledge and skills as a Councillor, to assist the organisation to which they are appointed.

(ii) The Guidance for Members on Outside Bodies details the main issues which Councillors should consider when appointed to outside bodies.

27. Ethical standards

(i) High ethical standards are the cornerstone of good governance. They are an integral part of good corporate governance arrangements and can lead to increased confidence in local democracy and better public services. Setting high ethical standards is an important building block for the Council in developing its community leadership role and improving

services to the community. Poor ethical standards in partnership arrangements may adversely affect the Council's community leadership role, reputation etc.

(ii) The Council aims to encourage high standards in partnership working, by defining appropriate behaviour in day to day partnership working, based on the Seven General Principles of Public Life (refer to para. (iv) below). The Council has adopted the [former] Standards for England Partnership Behaviour Protocol (the PBP) (Appendix 6), which is intended as a means to strengthen standards and accountability in partnership working. The PBP does not have a statutory basis or have sanctions attached to it. Nevertheless, it should enable those engaged in partnership working, to hold each other to account for the values and behaviours outlined in the PBP.

The PBP can be used at the pre-partnership stage and in the management of a partnership that is already in existence.

(iii) The values and behaviours outlined in the PBP are in addition to compliance with legal requirements – the PBP does not replace (but supports) the following:

- legal requirements on equal opportunities and antidiscrimination;
- mechanisms that are required for good governance (rather than the values that underpin them) such as financial probity, systems for establishing value for money and good practice around contracting and procurement.

(iv) The Audit Board (exercising its standards functions) encourages high standards of behaviour in the Council and amongst partners. The Seven General Principles of Public Life (referred to below), guide the conduct of Councillors and also underpin the [Member] Code of Conduct which all Borough Councillors, [voting] co-optees and Parish and Town Councillors, are bound:

- Selflessness
- Honesty
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Integrity
- Leadership

(v) Maintaining high standards is crucial to maintaining effective partnerships, but if problems are to occur, they are likely to be exacerbated by the adverse impact on partnership working, which may follow. The Seven General Principles are simple, and coherent, which means they can also be followed by partners, who are not obliged to formally adhere to the [Member] Code of Conduct. The Seven General Principles should as a minimum, be incorporated in all partnership arrangements.

(vi) Partners should be encouraged to sign up to the common values and behaviours set out in the PBP and provide evidence that they meet the values specified. Signing up to the PBP should satisfy Principle 3 'Demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour' of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework.

(vii) Partnerships can be monitored against the PBP. The Audit Board will act as chief promoter and champion of the PBP and will be the forum to oversee both the implementation and adherence to the PBP.

28. Whistleblowing and anti-fraud measures

(i) The Council has arrangements in place that are designed to promote and ensure probity and propriety in the conduct of its business.

(ii) The Bribery Act 2010 makes it an offence to offer, promise or give a bribe. It is also an offence to request, or agree to receive or accept a bribe. While the legislation takes a robust approach to commercial bribery, it also applies to individuals who attempt to influence the application of rules, regulations and normal procedures. The Council's Counter-Fraud and Corruption Strategy sets out the measures taken by it, to counter bribery and fraud.

(iii) The Council's Whistleblowing Policy enables employees, councillors, contractors, partners, agents acting for and on behalf of the Council, or members of the public, to express any concerns they have about illegal or illegitimate practices involving the Council.

29. Equality, diversity and social inclusion

The public sector equality duty is set out in the Equality Act 2010. In summary, the Council, must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

(a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
(b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic (as defined in the Act) and those who do not;
(c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Council is required to take account of the duty in everything it is required to do, as well as everything that it is allowed to do, such as entering into partnership arrangements. Officers should work together with partnerships to identify policies that will need to be analysed, to ensure that the equality duty is built into partnership working.

30. Complaints and redress

(i) Service users and the wider public have the same rights to hold partnerships to account and to obtain redress as they do with individual service providers; they have the right to expect partnerships to use public money to best effect.

(ii) The wide range of partnership models makes it impossible to prescribe a single set of arrangements for ensuring that their activities properly reflect the interests of their main stakeholders, including service users and others affected by partnership activities and decisions. However, where partnerships have dealings with the public, the Council should ensure that individuals do not face problems when seeking redress concerning services delivered through the partnership and that complaint handling and redress are central to the governance of the partnership.

(vi) Complainants should have a right of access to the partnership's complaints system and a right to obtain redress. Complainants have a right of access to the Local Government Ombudsman's service.

(vii) The Ombudsman's Special Report 'Local Partnerships and Citizen Redress', recommends the following good practice principles:

a. when a partnership is first created, there should be clarity regarding accountability for different parts of the work that will be carried out;

b. there should be a clear statement as to who is responsible for handling complaints and providing redress;

c. there needs to be effective communication with those who use the service, so that they understand what they need to do in the event of something going wrong; and

d. there should be a strong commitment to learning from complaints, so that services may be improved.

(v) Where a complaint is about the actions of a partnership exercising a discrete function of the Council, Officers should consider the need for the Council (if not already involved), to investigate the matter through its Corporate Complaints Procedure.

(vi) The partnership's complaints system should be consistent with the principles set out in the Local Government Ombudsmen's guidance on running a complaints system.

31. Reviewing new and existing partnership arrangements

(i) Existing 'major' partnerships should be reviewed on an annual basis against this Code by the Officer leading on the partnership arrangement, to determine whether they are still required, to evaluate how effectively they are working and to make recommendations for improvement.

(ii) 'Minor' partnership arrangements should also be reviewed on an annual basis, using a light touch approach, with focus on the financial and risk implications for the Council, of the partnership arrangements.

Reference material source:

Audit Commission 'Governing Partnerships – Bridging the Gap' October 2005 & Standards for England Partnership Behaviour Protocol - Paper 10/23

CIPFA 'Risk Management Guidance Notes No.11 – Partnership Risk Management'