

Partnership Arrangements Review Update to Audit Committee
21stMarch 2011

Background and progress to date

A project group was established to deliver the recommendations from the Internal Audit entitled Partnership Arrangements Review. The main purpose of the recommendations was to ensure good governance and performance management arrangements are in place for partnerships in which the council is involved. Work commenced in developing a partnership protocol and conducting an initial scope of partnership arrangements within the Council.

The recommendations were due to be delivered by the end March 2011. However, since this work was begun, the environment in which Local Authorities operate with respect to partnerships and performance has changed, which caused the group to assess the impact that these changes would have on local government and in particular to consider whether its original approach to this piece of work would still be appropriate.

Changing environment with regards partnerships and performance

Local Government has experienced the following changes since May 2010.

- Abolition of CAA and Use of Resources
- Abolition of LAA and the National Indicator Set
- Move away from central government inspection regime to local authority self-regulation
- Launch of Localism and Big Society

Locally, this has resulted in:

- Changes to the Partnership Support Board
- Creation of the Northamptonshire Partnership
- Anticipated review and re-focus of the LSP
- Shift in performance culture to self-regulation in the absence of regulation from central government

Future approach

Now that the council has greater clarity about the future role of partnership working and performance monitoring in Local Government, the project group proposes to amend its approach to delivering the recommendations of the original internal audit review by:

- Integrating the requirement for service areas to review their involvement in partnerships with existing processes, such as service planning and change management, rather than creating a separate and potentially bureaucratic protocol
- Providing officers with guidance in place of a protocol for what they must consider when entering into a partnership, but being less prescriptive about the process they have to follow to do this. This is in recognition that a single protocol could not cover the plethora of different partnerships that the council is currently involved in or may wish to join in the future, particularly as a result of initiatives such as Localism and Big Society
- Empower service areas to self regulate their involvement in partnership, but ensuring from the corporate centre that they conduct regular monitoring and review
- Acknowledging that the Council will likely enter into far more partnerships with a greater range of requirements upon the council in the future and that the partnership protocol will not be able to provide guidance for all

New processes to be live by end of May and rolled out to the Council by end of June 2011.