



## Wiltshire Council Partnership Protocol

Author	Partnership Project Group
Revision	V05
Created	September 2010
Revision Date	October 2011

# Contents

SECTIONS	PAGE
1. Introduction to and purpose of the Partnership Protocol Framework	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Purpose of Protocol	2
1.3 Definition of a Partnership	2
1.3.1 Definition of a Contract	3
1.3.2 Definition of a Grant	3
1.4 Categorising Partnerships by Risk	4
2. Working in Partnership	7
2.1 Identifying new Partnerships	7
2.2 Annual Review of Partnership Arrangements	8
2.3 Exiting Partnership Arrangements	8
2.4 Partnerships Database	9
3. Guidance for identifying and managing partnerships	10
3.1 Legal Status	10
3.2 Accountability	10
3.3 Auditing and Scrutiny Arrangements	11
3.4 Finance and Resources	11
3.5 Risk Management	11
3.6 Roles of Councillors and Officers	12
3.7 Equalities and Diversity	12
3.8 Communication in a Partnership Setting	13
3.9 Information sharing	14
3.10 Performance Management Arrangements	14

## PARTNERSHIP PROTOCOL

### SECTION 1 - Introduction To and Purpose of the Partnership Protocol Framework

#### 1.1 Introduction

This protocol sets out a framework for partnership working that will assist Councillors and officers when considering our involvement in partnership arrangements with external organisations including the voluntary sector.

As a Council we recognise:

- There are challenges to be addressed in Wiltshire which are outlined in the Wiltshire Community Plan (in place Autumn 2010) that require resolution and which we cannot, and should not, undertake on our own. We need, therefore to work positively and constructively in partnership with other organisations;
- Wiltshire has a range of diverse public bodies including NHS, Education, Fire and Police Authorities. We have overlapping roles and responsibilities and we need to establish greater clarity regarding our approach to these roles and responsibilities for the benefit of our communities;
- We need to establish clearly the difference between legal bodies, formal and informal partnership arrangements and contractual agreements;
- Our communities would like to have greater clarity on who is responsible for what services and support arrangements and who is accountable for delivering them;
- Existing and Potential Partners would like us to be clearer about what it means to work in partnership with the Council;

Wiltshire is fully committed to partnership working. We recognise the strength and value of effective partnerships in contributing to the improvement of the well-being of the County's communities. The Council encourages partnership working wherever possible.

Partnerships should, ultimately, improve the quality of services being provided to Wiltshire citizens and businesses. They should enable organisations to achieve better outcomes for communities that individual agencies could not achieve alone. There are a number of ways they can help to do this, including:

- improving service delivery through better co-ordination especially where services are provided by a range of organisations for our customers;
- tackling complex and county-wide issues;
- facilitating and increasing community engagement through improved information, consultation and participation;
- ensuring that services are customer focussed;
- stimulating more creative approaches to problems by bringing together people with different backgrounds and skills, sharing risks and rewards;
- generating greater influence than individual Partners could achieve;
- tackling complex cross-cutting issues;
- encouraging community benefits (including jobs and local economic effects);

- reducing waste and/or duplication, pooling resources (e.g. buildings, information and money) and improving value for money/economies of scale and scope;
- gaining access to new and scarce resources;
- meeting statutory requirements;
- providing opportunities for learning from people in different organisations;

## 1.2 Purpose of Protocol

The purpose of this protocol is to provide Wiltshire Council with rules of behaviour to ensure that the partnerships it works with are appropriate and have good governance managed alongside its Contract and Financial Regulations.

This protocol identifies:

- How the Council defines a partnership;
- Why the Council enters and engages in partnerships;
- What constitutes a significant (High Risk 3) partnership;
- Guidance for identifying, managing and supporting partnership arrangements;

The protocol also includes a partnership toolkit which provides guidance to Councillors and officers at every stage in the life of a partnership.

## 1.3 Definition of a Partnership

The word partnership is used with increasing frequency across all sectors. It can mean different things to different groups. The Audit Commission defines a partnership as “a group of stakeholders brought together from a range of organisations, to be responsible for tackling challenges, and exploiting opportunities in which they have a shared interest.”<sup>1</sup>

A partnership can be described as a joint working arrangement where the Partners:

- are two or more independent bodies working collectively to achieve more effective outcomes than they could by working separately;
- create a new organisational structure or process to achieve these outcomes;
- plan and implement a jointly agreed programme, often with joint staff or resources;
- share relevant information, and pool risks and rewards.

Further guidance from CIPFA adds clarity in defining two forms of partnership not underpinned by a contract.

“Executive Partnerships – To procure, directly, the services needed for the purposes of the Partners, or commission services jointly on behalf of Partner organisations, or which act in some other way on behalf of the Partners.

Advisory (Strategic) Partnerships – The Partners agree collectively what each should do henceforth, individually, to further the collective objectives of the partnership.”<sup>2</sup>

For the purposes of this protocol Wiltshire Council defines a partnership as:

<sup>1</sup> [www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgov/goodpractice/partnership](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/localgov/goodpractice/partnership)

<sup>2</sup> [www.tisonline.net](http://www.tisonline.net)

“an arrangement made between two or more organisations that they will work collectively to achieve shared objectives”.<sup>3</sup>

It is recognised that it can be difficult in some circumstances to distinguish between a contract, grant and partnership. This section aims to provide some guidance.

Officers can always approach the Legal Department or Performance Team for assistance in defining their arrangement. If there is any doubt, a determination by the Legal Department or Performance Team as to whether an arrangement is a partnership or not will confirm which protocol Officers should apply to their arrangements.

### 1.3.1 Definition of a Contract

From a formal legal point of view the defining characteristic of a contract is that if one of the organisations signed up to the contract does not do what they promised to do then the other organisations can make a court claim for damages against the non-performing organisation. The contract has created a “legal relationship”. Generally it would not be expected that a partnership would create such a legal relationship, non-performance would be a matter for discussion and resolution somewhere other than in court. However, some partnerships are structured such that a legal relationship is created. This does not mean it ceases to be a partnership but it does mean that if things do go wrong then the consequences can include some sort of court action.

An example of where a partnership gains a “legal relationship” (and so has the possibility of a court action associated with it) would be where one of the organisations gets some sort of payment or reward (it does not have to be money) from the others for delivering services for the partnership. If staff from one organisation deliver that service that another organisation is being paid to deliver (even if those staff are “seconded”) there may be TUPE consequences. It is hard to give general rules for this sort of situation, but caution should be exercised and advice sought from the Legal Department.

The Council purchases large amounts of goods, works or services from businesses which are paid to provide such items. These are straight contracts and not partnerships because the objectives of the parties are not the same. The business wants to be paid and the Council wants to receive what it has bought.

An example of a straight contract will be for maintenance services: the Council contracts with a third party who provides services in return for payment. The contract may be described as a ‘partnership’ or contain ‘partnering’ elements, but it is in fact a contractual arrangement. These contracts are subject to the Council’s Contract Regulations and assistance with these can be obtained from the Corporate Procurement Unit.

### 1.3.2 Definition of a Grant

The Council also gives and receives grant funding. These arrangements are not partnerships the grant-giver usually leaves the recipient to get on with achieving certain outcomes. They do not work together in partnership.

Wiltshire Council does not define a partnership as:

- Where, on occasion, the Council will participate in reference groups or appoint an officer or elected councillor to an external panel to discuss forthcoming issues, policy and strategy.
- Where the sole purpose is information-sharing, the arrangement is not a partnership which will require approval under this process.

- Contractual arrangements that include partnership arrangements and partnership arrangements that include contractual arrangements: For example: 'Section 75 agreements' (The Health Care Act flexibilities or agreements) and Private Finance Arrangements (PFI) and other commercial agreements

## 1.4 Categorising Partnerships by Risk

It is important that the organisation understand the nature of its partnership and manages its governance based on risk. The sections below provide more detailed information to help determine which category applies to each partnership and should be reviewed before making any determination on a partnership.

As a summary providing 'headline' information only, the three broad categories of partnerships are:

.. Level 3 – Significant Partnership - where the Council has full responsibility (e.g. for delivery and/or finance) and/or acts as the Lead or Accountable Body or the partnership is high risk for some other reason. Value (contributed or managed) of £1 million or above per annum (High Risk);

.. Level 2 – where the Council contributes resources to the partnership, but is not the Accountable Body or the partnership is medium risk for other reasons. Value (contributed or managed) in the range from £50,000 to less than £1 million per annum (Medium Risk);

.. Level 1 – where the Council is a partner but input is limited to advice on strategy or its role is consultative or supportive. Value (contributed or managed) of less than £50,000 per annum (Low Risk).

Officers should always match the risk rating under the Partnerships Protocol to the risk rating given to the partnership in your Service Risk Register and the Corporate Risk Register.

If it is not clear from the guidance below who should be the Reviewing Officer for a particular partnership, then the relevant Service Director will determine the matter in accordance with the department's scheme of delegation.

### What Constitutes a Significant (Level 3 High Risk) Partnership?

Prior to entering into a partnership agreement it is important to determine whether a partnership constitutes a 'Significant' working arrangement.

#### Significant(Level3HighRisk)Partnership

High risk partnerships will normally be those where the Council accepts main or full responsibility for delivery, financial control or both.

The 'monetary risk' threshold for High Risk partnerships is £1 million per annum. Therefore, if the partnership deals with funding, or where it could incur liabilities, in excess of this amount, it should be classified as a significant partnership Level 3 High Risk.

Whether a partnership is Level 3 or not is based on the actual risk profile of the partnership assessment. Assistance should be sought from senior Officers and/or the Performance Team and/or the Legal Team where there is uncertainty

A high risk partnership will usually be characterised by the Council acting as the 'accountable body' or 'lead body', but even where these terms are not used, it is likely that this category will apply when the other partners expect the Council to enter into

contracts for the partnership, control the funding, effect delivery or appoint staff (or a combination of these).

Where the Council is the accountable body on behalf of a partnership which it does not control (i.e. where the other partners can direct the Council as to how it should act), then the partnership will usually be Level 3.

Nevertheless, where the partnership spend is minimal and/or the Council's risk profile is low then the fact that the Council holds the accountable body role will not automatically put a partnership into Level 3.

If the Council receives grant funding on behalf of a partnership where it is the accountable body, but where the Council does not have a decision-making veto, then such partnerships should usually be categorised as Level 3, depending also on the amount of the funding and the requirements which come with it.

Officers should always read grant documents carefully before committing to partnerships where the Council gives up control over the uses of the grant funding.

It may also be the case that a partnership where the Council is not the lead organisation is in fact a Significant High Risk partnership. This might happen where the partnership in question affects the reputation of the Council, is politically important or sensitive, or where we are committing a very high level of resources.

As a rule of thumb, a high level of resources commitment which would put a partnership into the Level 3 category would be money or assets (including officer time and Council facilities) with a value of £1 million per annum or more. This is similar to the position within the Contract Regulations where contracts of £1 million or above per annum are approved at Cabinet level.

Where the Council is not the accountable body, but it does accept a share in risk, for example by indemnifying other partners or by agreeing to meet a share of overspends and the possible liability is £1 million or above, then the partnership should be classified as Level 3. Level 3 Partnerships Forms should be reviewed and signed off by the relevant Service Director, or another Officer to whom this responsibility has been delegated. They must be passed to Cabinet for review, alongside the usual report, before they are completed and registered.

It is important to note that some partnerships have their own partnership families. In these cases only the parent partnership is regarded as a significant partnership. The exception to this is the Wiltshire Family of Partnerships which is identified in the Wiltshire Partnership Report January 2010.

Guidance should be sought from the Performance Team and Legal Team as to the correct categorisation if the Council's liabilities are not clear.

#### Level2–MediumRisk

Medium Risk partnerships will usually be those where the Council is not acting as the leading organisation or the main funder, but where it contributes some of its resources in support of the partnership.

As a rule of thumb for assessing medium risk partnerships, these will be where the Council commits or manages resources (including officer time and Council facilities, as well as assets and/or funding) with a value range from £50,000 to less than £1 million per annum during the operation of the partnership.

Some arrangements where the Council is the recipient of grant funding on behalf of the partnership will be medium (rather than high) risk if the terms of the relevant grant funding do not impose significant accountability onto the Council in relation to the use of that grant funding.

Likewise, if the Council's acceptance of an accountable or responsible role (leading delivery or controlling finances) does not constitute a high risk arrangement, then the partnership should be designated as Level 2.

If the Council accepts a share in the risk of delivery, for example by giving an indemnity to the accountable body or by agreeing to make up a share of any overspends, but the possible liability does not exceed the thresholds set out above, then the partnership should be designated as Level 2.

Level 2 Partnerships Forms should be reviewed and signed off by the Service Director, or another Senior Officer to whom this responsibility has been delegated.

Guidance should be sought from the Performance Team and/or Legal Team as to the correct categorisation if the Council's liabilities are not clear.

#### Level 1 – Low Risk

A low risk partnership will be any arrangement in which the Council participates as a partner, but where it only provides advice or support at a low level.

If the Council's role is to provide specialist advice, some care must be exercised to ensure that the insurance position is managed (e.g. professional indemnity cover for technical advice).

As a general rule, a commitment of officer time or Council resources which are valued at less than £50,000 per annum will constitute a low risk participation.

Level 1 Partnerships Forms should be reviewed and signed off by Line Managers, or another Officer to whom this responsibility has been delegated.

Guidance should be sought from the Performance Team and/or Legal Team as to the correct categorisation if the Council's liabilities are not clear.

## SECTION 2 – Working in Partnership

### 2.1 Identifying new partnerships

Partnership working can be very rewarding and deliver outstanding results for communities; however it can also be difficult and is generally resource intensive, especially in the early stages. Therefore the Council should consider other options before taking the decision to enter into a new partnership. These could include:

- using an existing partnership to deliver the objective – this will almost certainly deliver results more quickly and effectively because the partnership is already established, even if it requires some adjustment to existing scope and membership of the partnership;
- Consulting others on proposals but ensuring that one agency retains responsibility for decisions and actions;
- Contractual arrangements, if different benefits are to be produced for different Partners.

Any Council participation in new partnerships must be approved through the appropriate levels, dependant on the size, value, importance and impact of the partnership.

The Wiltshire Assembly should be consulted on the creation of any new Significant (Level 3 - High Risk) partnership arrangement in the county to ensure continuity and prevent duplication.

All partnerships, existing and new, must demonstrate how Council participation will improve outcomes for the communities of Wiltshire. This should be assessed by reviewing alignment of the objectives and the intended outcomes of the partnership with

1. The Council's own priorities (Corporate Plan/Business Plan)
2. The priorities of the Wiltshire Assembly Community Plan
3. The Local Agreement for Wiltshire (LAW)

To ensure consistency, the Service Director involved will evaluate the Council's proposed membership of a partnership using the Partnership Toolkit. If judged to be a significant (High Risk 3) partnership the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) will be approached for formal approval. For other partnerships approval is delegated to the Reviewing Officer.

Any decision in relation to starting, joining or exiting a partnership arrangement must be made with consideration to the Council's constitution.

Guidance should be sought from the Legal Team and the Performance Team.

Where a representative on a partnership needs authority beyond the existing Council Constitution or Scheme of Delegation to take part in decision-making, a report will need to be submitted to the Cabinet for its consideration, Cabinet approval must be gained for partnerships in excess of £1 million per annum.

The Council's representative(s) should report on partnership achievement against targets/ outcomes. Officer representatives will report to Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) as required.

## 2.2 Annual review of Partnership Arrangements

More emphasis has been placed on partnership working with the onus on local strategic partnerships to drive forward a framework for effective and co-ordinated local service delivery, through and with key partners.

In addition, national policies such as the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 and the 'Communities in Control: real people, real power' White Paper of 2008 have placed new requirements on partners and partnerships. Plus, the coalition programme for government and "Big Society".

The above shifts the focus of partnership working from strategic co-ordination to strategic delivery. From managing relationships between partners to managing outcomes and performance and to provide efficiencies through delivering more integrated public services.

The review would establish whether the partners need to take any action to further improve partnership working in light of the new Community Plan and Local Area Agreement and any forthcoming challenges.

The annual review process outlined in the Partnership Toolkit will facilitate compliance in line with Wiltshire's Risk Management Strategy. The purpose of the review is to allow the Council to decide whether its requirements are being met and be assured that the partnership is effective.

The Toolkit includes an annual review template as Appendix 4 and will be completed by the Council representative on the partnership and provided to CLT annually. An overall statement will be made as part of service planning regarding the reviews and outcomes.

## 2.3 Exiting Partnership Arrangements

Through the annual review process it may be identified that it is time for a partnership arrangement to cease, or for the Council to leave a partnership arrangement. This can be for many different reasons

- The partnership has achieved all that it set out to do;
- The priorities of the Council or the county change;
- On review, the partnership is not delivering the outputs and outcomes it was set up to do and a new approach needs to be explored;
- The partnership is replaced by another partnership or working arrangement;
- External funding/resources cease;
- On review an adverse level of risk of continuing the partnership is identified;
- The legal framework upon which the partnership was founded changes.

The Council's approach in the event of any of the above is:

- It is inevitable that some schemes/initiatives/programmes will need to be sustained. In these circumstances, it is essential that partnerships have succession strategies in place in advance to address such circumstances. If the Council is the lead Partner or the accountable body, the Council will seek to ensure that succession strategies are in place or developed for such eventualities.

- The Council will develop exit strategies for situations where it wishes to withdraw from a partnership for corporate and strategic reasons.
- Any decision to leave a significant partnership (Level 3 High Risk) arrangement will be considered and agreed at CLT level.

## 2.4 Partnerships Database

Wiltshire Council will maintain a partnerships database. This will be developed and owned by the Corporate Procurement Unit (CPU). All directorates will maintain records within the partnerships database, as defined in this protocol. The database will act as a record of partnerships, provide a reporting tool and as such be used to manage the implementation of this protocol. It will have automatic reminders around reviews to ensure they are undertaken and provide an audit trail to improve governance.

## SECTION 3 - Guidance for Identifying and Managing Partnerships

When entering into or reviewing its membership of a Partnership the Council will use an Annual Review Template to guide its decision making process and to prompt the Council to review and provide evidence in relation to each of these requirements.

### 3.1 Legal Status

It is important to understand the distinction between what many normally refer to as partnership working and a formally constituted legal partnership. What the law understands as a partnership is a group of people or organisations working together on a common business enterprise with the aim of making a profit. It seems unlikely that any arrangements the Council would become involved in will meet this definition, however if there is any doubt then legal advice should be sought.

Nonetheless many of the arrangements described in this document will (as mentioned above) contain aspects that are legally binding. It is important to ensure that the Council has the legal power to enter into the partnership, and equally important, is not contravening any law in doing so.

The status of any partnership should be clear. A partnership “agreement” or “Terms of Reference” is required to define how Partners will work together. The length and status of this document will vary between partnerships. It may be that some parts of the agreement will have the status of a protocol or statement of intent, while other parts are legally binding.

The different roles that the Council can play in partnerships need to be understood. Which role it plays can have a significant impact on the responsibilities and liabilities of the Council. Early advice from the Legal Department should be sought to ensure this is clear.

The Legal Department may need to be involved in the development of the partnership (in particular regarding legal powers, and in the event that legal relationships are desired within the partnership on the legal structure and to help identify and consider legal liabilities) and must be involved in the drawing up of any legally binding agreements.

The responsibilities of all Partners should be clarified and be in the agreement. These can include health and safety, community safety, equalities and diversity, or other statutory responsibilities. While the partnership may not be bound by statutory duties in these areas, the Council must ensure that it fulfils its statutory duties in its work through the partnership.

Representation of the Council on the partnership should be made clear. If it is a significant partnership (Level 3) then it will require Councillor and officer representation. Others may only require officer representation. Substitute representatives should also be identified as required.

### 3.2 Accountability

It is important to understand any partnerships accountability from a number of different aspects, these could include:

1. Financial – Does the partnership prepare annual reports?
2. Dispute Resolution – How the partnership will resolve disputes?

3. Political – How will the partnership deal with media/communications issues and tenuous government requirements?
4. Reputational – Ensure that the Equality & Diversity obligations of the council are met, and meet needs of people and partners?

There should be a clear statement about how and to whom the partnership is accountable and what this accountability includes.

The partnership should identify which organisation/authority's constitution the partnership is answerable to and include this in any partnership "agreement" or "Terms of Reference" drawn up.

A statement should also be made on the constituent member's accountability to each other, including any expectations of behaviour.

### 3.3 Auditing and Scrutiny Arrangements

The auditing and scrutiny arrangement for a partnership should be clear. The Council must ascertain where responsibility for these functions lies. This is particularly important if a partnership manages or allocates the resources of its Partners through any pooled or alignment arrangements.

These arrangements should be clearly referenced in any partnership agreement or Terms of Reference agreed.

### 3.4 Finance and Resources

Before entering into any partnership the Council will give consideration to its ability to contribute effectively to the partnership. The Council will 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.

### 3.5 Risk Management

Risks should be understood and evaluated at all stages of partnership development. In considering risks, these could be viewed in two timeframes:

- At the point of deciding whether to enter into a partnership, the risk identification, analysis and profiling are most important steps in the whole process. Without identifying and analysing the risks effectively the remaining steps will be undertaken with inadequate information. Advice should be sought from the Performance and Risk Unit who support the council to manage risks effectively through a Risk Management Strategy supplemented by guidance, advice and information. The Council's current procedure on risk assessment should form part of any documentation that is used to support the development of a partnership, and the mitigation plans should be clearly understood by all involved;
- When the decision to enter into a partnership has been made, if the Council is the lead body the Council will ensure that the governance arrangements of the partnership include effective management of risk. As the lead agency the Council will ensure that the risks associated with the partnership working are recorded with service plans or associated documents. If the Council is not the lead agency, the

representatives should seek to ensure that minimum standards of risk management are in place, and that the representatives understand the level of risk attached to the Council's involvement.

### 3.6 Roles of Councillors and Officers

The Council will be represented on any agreed partnership by specified Councillors and/or officers. Each partnership that the Council is represented on will be allocated a sponsoring officer (usually a Corporate Director) who, although they may personally not be the representative on the partnership, they will be responsible for ensuring the delivery of this protocol in respect of the relevant partnership.

Any specified officers or Councillors attending approved partnerships will represent only the Council and no other organisation, unless by specific agreement of the Chief Executive (for officers) or the Leader in consultation with the Chief Executive (for Members). They shall abide by their respective Council Codes of Conduct at all times.

The terms of reference for any Council representative will include requirements for them to:

- Act on behalf of the Council within specific parameters;
- Ensure activities are co-ordinated across the Council to meet the Council's commitments to the partnership;
- Seek agreement with Corporate Leadership Team/Corporate Director or, if the Constitution requires it, the Council, for any new resources not already agreed or budgeted for.

Representation on any partnership does not permit any officer or Councillor to commit the Council to use resources not contained within approved budgets nor to act as a public spokesperson for the Council.

The Legal Department will, from time to time, review the appropriateness of representation on Partnerships to ensure that the Council is represented by the right people at any given time, matching skills with needs.

The Legal Department can provide any necessary advice and guidance to its representatives on partnerships regarding potential liabilities for them and the Council, and on their responsibilities and accountabilities.

### 3.7 Equality and Diversity

This section concentrates on equal opportunities and asks questions about whether partnering organisations complies with the following legislation:-

- Human Rights Act 1998,
- Equality Act 2010

The Council is committed to doing everything possible to promote equality and embrace diversity in all forms throughout our organisation and communities. By working with others and playing an active role in partnerships, Wiltshire Council can promote equality and diversity effectively to ensure other organisations adopt the same policy.

There are a number of benefits of promoting an understanding of equality issues in the work of partnerships, not least compliance with the legislative duties to protect service users and employees from discrimination and isolation. Systematically building the aims and principles of the duty into the work of the partnership will help it to:

- meet the needs of all the communities it serves or hopes to benefit;
- improve the way public services are delivered;
- contribute to a culture of inclusion, based on mutual respect for people irrespective of gender, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, age;
- prevent racism and discrimination, both in the way the partnership works and in the outcomes it is working towards; and
- improve public confidence in local services.

The partnership has overall responsibility for its actions and decisions. However, the legal liability for meeting the duty rests with the listed authorities in the partnership. This means that these authorities should make sure that the partnership takes account of the duty in its work, and that all members of the partnership are aware of the listed authorities' legal responsibilities. Making sure that the partnership introduces safeguards such as monitoring and reporting systems will help listed authorities to meet the duty.

An Equalities Impact Assessment should be undertaken in line with corporate guidance and if these arrangements are not in place there must be an action plan in place to deliver these within six months of the Council joining or starting a partnership. Further guidance should be sought from the Legal Department.

### 3.8 Communication in a Partnership Setting

The Council requires all significant partnerships to develop a Partnership Communications Agreement with the lead communications contacts of all Partners. This agreement should address branding, marketing and media issues and helps services identify which brand to use when working in partnership. Advice from the Communications Team can be sought to assist with this and contact details are provided within the Toolkit.

The agreement will cover the following points:

- Which partner(s) will respond to external media inquiries and issue press material
- What branding will be used on communications material and whether the partnership will have its own branding
- What the sign off process is for all communications material
- Where the partnership places information on the web and how partners link to this from their websites
- Specify who develops and commissions communications activities for the partnership
- What arrangements there are for communications teams from the various partner members to regularly meet to coordinate activities
- How individual partners will communicate the activities of the partnership within their own organisation
- Where funding for any communications activity will come from and what the budget will be

The Council will 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.

It is important to recognise the Council's investment within partnership working. Public satisfaction surveys indicate that residents are not always sure about where the Council spends their money. This lack of awareness can be compounded by partnerships within which the council is invisible.

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.

### 3.9 Information Sharing

The Council's Data Protection Policy will apply where Council business is concerned. The Council will seek to secure an Information Sharing Agreement within a partnership and between partnership organisations. This should be consistent with the Partnership Data Sharing Statement agreed through the Wiltshire Assembly

### 3.10 Performance Management Arrangements

Any partnership that the Council enters into must be clear on its purpose and the outcomes it is to deliver. The Council will ensure that partnerships have in place robust performance management arrangements. When entering into partnership arrangements the Council should ascertain whether:

- The partnership has an officer accountable for monitoring its performance;
- The partnership has a credible evidence base to inform its objective, planning and target setting;
- There are action plans in place;
- Partners share information to enable effective performance monitoring and option appraisal;
- There are joint mechanisms in place for performance management;
- Findings are owned and acted upon;
- Arrangements are in place to tackle issue of non or poor performance.

Further advice can be sought from the Performance Team, Reference Data Quality Policy.