

Audit Committee – 28th February 2020

Title of paper:	Partnership Governance Annual Health Checks of Nottingham City Council's Significant Partnerships	
Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):	Colin Monckton - Director of Strategy and Policy James Rhodes - Head of Analysis and Insight	Wards affected: All
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Other colleagues who have provided input:	Oliver Maltby, Internal Audit John Slater, Internal Audit	
Recommendation(s):		
1	To note the key findings from the Partnership Governance Health Checks of partnerships on the Register of Significant Partnerships.	
2	To note the findings and recommendations following verification of governance documentation of three of the partnerships.	
3	To remove the Green Nottingham Partnership from the Register of Significant Partnerships.	

1 Reasons for recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Audit Committee note paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8 detailing the key findings of the annual partnership governance Health Checks. The vast majority of partnerships scored 'good/excellent' in all areas. Two of these Health Checks, and the governance documents referenced in them, have been verified by colleagues from the Corporate Policy and Performance team and Internal Audit. The findings of all verifications can be found in Appendix 4.
- 1.2 There are two proposed changes to the Register of Significant Partnerships for 2019/2020, the first of which is to note that as of 27th June 2019 the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board was replaced by the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership. It is proposed that the partnership remains on the register under its new guise. The register is included in Appendix 1.
- 1.3 The second proposed change to the Register is the removal of the Green Nottingham Partnership. In previous years, issues have arisen whereby governance documentation has not been in place or has not been formalised. It has been impossible to resolve these due to the group having no formal administrative function, unlike others on the Register which may have dedicated officer and/or Constitutional Services support for their partnerships. Following discussion with officers from Energy Services about these meetings, and with colleagues in Internal Audit, it has been suggested that the Green Nottingham Partnership does not meet the threshold of a formal partnership and as such should be removed from the Register. A further conversation with the Head of One Nottingham has confirmed that if the Green Nottingham Partnership is removed from the Register it will not affect its status as a

themed One Nottingham partnership, therefore oversight of the group's work and remit will still be in place. The Strategic Cultural Partnership was removed from the Register in 2015 for similar reasons and continues to operate. The Green Nottingham Partnership, which includes representation from the two Nottingham universities and local businesses, will continue to act as an invaluable advisory group for Nottingham City Council to work towards its ambitious environmental agenda.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council has a long and successful history of working in partnership across the public, private, voluntary and third sectors. The benefits and opportunities of working in partnership are well understood but risks can arise from collaborative working and the Council must ensure that its involvement in partnerships does not expose it to an unacceptable level of risk.
- 2.2 The Partnership Governance Framework includes an annual 'Health Check' of each partnership which is significant to the City Council in terms of strategic, reputational or financial importance. This Health Check is designed to identify any risks to the Council from its involvement in any of the partnerships. The results of these Health Checks are reported to Audit Committee along with remedial actions that are needed to protect the Council from an unacceptable level of risk.
- 2.3 Partnerships are not included where there are other governance arrangements in place, for example a contract or Service Level Agreement.
- 2.4 The partnerships that are deemed significant to the Council in terms of their strategic, reputational or financial importance are listed in the Register of Significant Partnerships (Appendix 1). Any changes to the register are reported to Audit Committee annually.

2.5 Health Checks

Each partnership on the Register of Significant Partnerships is asked to complete an annual self-assessment of the 'health' of the partnership's governance, giving a score as to how well they meet the criteria. The scores from the Health Checks undertaken in 2019 (this paper was due to be presented to Audit Committee in November 2019 but the meeting was cancelled) are provided in Appendix 2.

- 2.6 As Appendix 2 shows, the majority of partnerships scored themselves 'Excellent' or 'Good' (1 or 2) in all areas. We reviewed the supporting information and agreed with the majority of scores. Where we questioned any of the evidence for partnerships subject to verification this year, recommendations for remedial action are detailed in Appendix 4. For partnerships which were not verified this year, an explanation of any disputed scores is included below.
- 2.7 This report draws Audit Committee's attention to partnerships with a rating of 3 (some key areas for improvement) or 4 (many key weaknesses) in one or more areas. In 2019 the following partnership scored themselves 3 or 4:

- 2.7 The Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership (NCSCP, formerly the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board) has again scored itself 3 (some key areas for improvement) for 'Finance', which it has done for the last three years. The NCSCP states that "There continues to be a significant pressure on the proposed budget for the Safeguarding Boards for 2019/20 and there will be again for the

foreseeable future". It provides a degree of reassurance by also confirming that "Partners have set a budget that has enabled the partnership to deliver its Business Plan". The majority of partnerships, alongside local authorities themselves, are affected by pressure on budgets; this fact could therefore result in a similar score across the majority of the Council's partnerships. Last year we accepted a score of 3 due to changes in working practice and the move to a Strategic Management Board from June 2019, which meant responsibility was shared between the local authority, the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Police. Now that these changes have been implemented, we recommend this score is changed to 2 to reflect that budget concerns are inherent to the future and operation of any of the partnerships, and that the NCSCP does at least have assurance it can deliver on its business plan.

2.10 **Verification of governance documents**

The Health Checks of some of the partnerships are verified each year on a rolling programme. Officers from Corporate Policy and Performance and Internal Audit evaluate the partnerships' governance documents and other documentation noted in their Health Check. The recommendations from the verification process can be found in Appendix 4. This year the partnerships which were verified were:

2.10.1 Children's Partnership Board

2.10.2 D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

2.11 The schedule for verifying partnerships has been updated and is included in Appendix 5.

2.12 **Register of Significant Partnerships**

As proposed in paragraph 1.3, we recommend the Green Nottingham Partnership is removed from the Register of Significant Partnerships as it does not meet the threshold for inclusion and does not have the administrative support function of other partnerships on the Register. The Green Nottingham Partnership enjoys representation from the two Nottingham universities and local businesses, and will continue to act as an advisory group supporting Nottingham City Council to work towards its environmental agenda.

2.13 One partnership has changed its name; the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board is now the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Partnership. We recommend the partnership remains on the register. The register is included in Appendix 1.

2.14 **Additions for next year**

We have no recommendations for partnerships which should be added to the register for next year. If a partnership is found to meet the criteria for addition to the register before the process begins next year, a request will be sent to the Chair of Audit Committee.

2.15 **Looking Ahead**

It is likely the partnership landscape will change significantly over the next few years with potential changes occurring as a result of new Government leadership and a new Parliamentary Session, and also due to the UK's exit from the European Union and funding challenges facing local authorities. Any new and emerging partnerships will be considered for inclusion on the Register of Significant Partnerships and the validity of partnerships currently on the register will be evaluated on an annual basis.

3 Background papers other than published works or those disclosing exempt or confidential information

3.1 None.

4 Published documents referred to in compiling this report

4.1 Partnership Governance Framework, approved by the Executive Board Commissioning Sub Committee on 13 May 2009.