

Report to:

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Relevant Officers:

Mark Towers, Director of Governance and Partnerships
Tracy Greenhalgh, Head of Risk and Audit

Date of Meeting:

30 September 2021

PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To consider adopting a Partnership Governance Framework, as recommended in the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan and at the meeting of the Committee on 29 April 2021 where consideration was given to a local Code of Corporate Governance.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 The Audit Committee is asked to recommend Council to adopt the attached Partnership Governance Framework and form part of the Council's Constitution.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 The Annual Governance statement action plan agreed by Audit Committee in November 2020, identified that in terms of good practice the adoption of a Partnership Governance Framework was recommended. This will assist and bring consistency in respect of good governance in partnerships and will help mitigate the Council and other stakeholders' risk in being part of such partnerships.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No – this will be a new framework and will form part of the Constitution

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 An amended version of the attached, although it should reflect the local Code of Governance as considered by the Committee in April 2021.

5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The proposed Partnership Governance Framework is relevant to all Council priorities.

6.0 Background Information

6.1 Blackpool Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance

with the law and proper standards. It needs to ensure that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. This applies equally to its partnerships, which have become an increasingly important way of delivering strategic objectives and services but which produce particular risk and governance issues. For example, partners from different organisations with different priorities and cultures may not have the same opinion about partnership objectives, outcomes and activity. The Council needs to protect itself from risk when working with other partners on significant issues.

- 6.2 The Council therefore needs to know what its significant partnerships are, understand their purpose, how they are operated and governed and be able to influence arrangements where necessary. This framework plays a key role by setting expectations of how 'Significant' partnerships should be governed and by establishing the procedures the Council uses to obtain assurance over them. Although this framework is aimed at 'Significant' partnerships, the principles within it can be adapted for other partnerships.
- 6.3 To protect the position of the Council and its residents, the Council needs assurance that partnership governance supports its operation, including in such key areas as decision-making, accountability and regulatory compliance. The proposed framework complies with good practice, including 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' (CIPFA/SOLACE) 2016 and 'Governing Partnerships: Bridging the Accountability Gap' (Audit Commission).
- 6.4 This framework is for those already involved in partnerships or who are looking at establishing new partnerships. Its purpose is to help officers and members evaluate and influence partnership governance by defining what a 'Significant partnership' is and setting out the principles of partnership governance. The officer Good Governance Group, it is proposed, is tasked with providing practical guidance, model policies and templates.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

7.0 List of Appendices:

- 7.1 Appendix 9(a) – Proposed Partnership Governance Framework.

8.0 Financial considerations:

- 8.1 There are no specific financial considerations in the report although financial management is a key principle of the proposed Partnership Governance Framework.

9.0 Legal considerations:

- 9.1 There is no legal requirement to have a Partnership Governance Framework but it is recognised as good practice and will help mitigate risk in respect of the Council in carrying out its duties with partners.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

- 10.1 Risk management is a key principle in the proposed Partnership Governance Framework and

a risk assessment is recommended to be undertaken in determining if a partnership meets the criteria set out.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 There are no equalities considerations relating to this report.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 Ethical and responsible governance is a thematic area in the Code of Governance and is also reflected in the Partnership Governance Framework.

13.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

13.1 In October 2016 a Good Governance Group was formed at the Council. One of the roles of the group will be to prepare the Annual Governance Statement and oversee the delivery of the identified actions. This is chaired by the Director of Governance and Partnerships. A Sub Group of this Group has put together this proposed Framework.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.