



TO: Audit & Governance Committee

FROM: PMO Manager

DATE: 29th March 2022

PORTFOLIOS AFFECTED: All

WARDS AFFECTED: All

TITLE OF REPORT: Significant Partnerships Register 2021/22

1. PURPOSE

To provide Members with an update on the Significant Partnerships Register for 2021/22. The Register identifies all the significant partnerships the local authority is involved in as per the Audit & Governance Committee's Terms of Reference.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Audit & Governance Committee is asked to:

- Review and approve the significant partnerships submitted for inclusion in the 2021/22 register.
- Note the updated key lines of enquiry within the Code of Audit Practice and the important role of partnerships.

3. BACKGROUND

An update around Significant Partnerships in BwDBC is presented to the Audit & Governance Committee annually and this fulfils the organisation's responsibilities under the Council's Code of Corporate Governance. This year, it will also support the value for money key lines of enquiry within the new Code of Audit Practice.

The Significant Partnerships Register was audited by the BwDBC Audit & Assurance team in November 2021. The Audit categorised the Control Environment as Substantial Assurance and Compliance as Adequate Assurance. Three recommendations were made to improve the Register and its associated processes and these have been implemented. The register has been reviewed and will now hold more detail about changes to Partnerships and when these were made. The process to ensure frameworks are returned to the team has also been strengthened.

4. RATIONALE

Partnerships included in the Register are defined by the Council's Code of Corporate Governance. The Register is updated on an annual basis and a smaller mid-year review also takes place. Directors are responsible for updating the Register and approving the partnerships which will be added to or removed from the Register. The Register ensures that partnerships throughout the local authority are well governed and that appropriate oversight is in place.

The new Code of Audit Practice recognises the role significant partnerships hold in ensuring value for money and therefore it is a key line of enquiry within the workbook.

Five key areas of consideration are identified within the Code and the evidence collated by each Significant Partnership Framework supports the documentation of the requirements. This year's review will incorporate the areas of consideration and ensure lead officers are aware of the revised requirements under the Code of Audit Practice.

5. KEY ISSUES

The Significant Partnerships Register 2021/22 review is currently underway. The impact of the Omicron Covid-19 surge has delayed the initial timescales of the update. A list of the current partnerships is included as Appendix 1 (please note this is undergoing updates).

Work is ongoing to ensure all frameworks are in place and completed to the required standard. As reported in the update to Audit & Governance Committee in March 2021, numerous partnerships were established to support the Covid-19 response. The majority of these were not classed as Significant Partnerships but support and advice was provided by the team to ensure adequate governance and record-keeping arrangements were in place.

The Lancashire Resilience Forum which was formed in 2004 is the significant partnership which has led the Covid-19 response and recovery along with many sub-groups. Many of these have now ended whilst those still in operation are in recovery mode. Some of the groups have evolved or merged with other local/regional groups for example, the LRF Covid-19 BAME Cell is now the Pan-Lancashire COVID-19 impact on Ethnic Minority (EM) groups meeting.

There have also been some changes to the staff and lead officers responsible for existing Significant Partnerships due to the departure (or imminent) of senior staff and this will result in interim lead officers being assigned to the partnerships whilst recruitment takes place. The Register will be updated once positions are filled.

As we move into business as usual and into recovery post Covid-19 response, it is vital that partnerships and new structures are captured, updated, reported and undertaken with effective governance as well as reporting into the relevant strategic forums. A mid-year review is scheduled to take place in September 2022 which will ensure all updates are captured.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no policy implications arising from this report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no resource implications arising from this report.

10. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATION

There are no equality implications arising from this report.

11. CONSULTATIONS

Individual Directors approve each entry on the register and the information within the related framework. Entries without a Director's signature are not accepted.

Contact Officer: Mohsin Mulla (ext. 5525)
Date: 18.3.2022
Background Papers: Significant Partnerships Register
(Appendix 1 – attached separately)