



**CASTLE POINT
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

Contents

Policy Objectives	Page 3
Introduction	Page 4
Why work in Partnership	Page 5
Supporting the councils corporate objectives & priorities	Page 5
Improve social, environmental and economic Well being of the borough	Page 5
Meet government requirements	Page 5
Assist our partners to meet their objectives	Page 6
Partnership Strategy – Good Practice	Page 7
Resourcing partnerships	Page 6
Supporting partnerships	Page 8
Measuring performance of partnerships	Page 8
Financing partnerships	Page 9
Evaluating, monitoring & reviewing partnerships	Page 9
Rationalising partnerships	Page 10
Formal Contractual partnerships	Page 11
Partnership Strategy – Implementation	Page 12
Service departments	Page 12
Elected Members	Page 12
Other Councils	Page 13
Current partnership working	Page 14

Appendices

Council Corporate Priorities	Page 15/17
Partnership working – Some key questions	Page 18/19
Current examples of partnership working	Page 20/22
Comprehensive List of Partners	Page 23/24

Policy objectives:

Castle Point Borough Council will work in partnership with external organisations to:

- 1) Support the Council's corporate objectives.*
- 2) Improve the social, environmental and economic well being of the borough.*
- 3) Meet Government requirements.*
- 4) Assist our partners to meet their objectives (where they would be to the benefit of the community of Castle Point).*

Introduction

Working in partnership is increasingly becoming a critical task for local authorities and other public bodies. The number of partnerships is growing, both in response to central government requirements and as a result of local initiatives. Working in partnership can be a productive way of achieving more efficient and effective use of scarce resources.

Since local councils have been charged with the duty to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of their area the scope for partnership working has increased enormously. However partnership working can be difficult to do well, it can be costly if not properly managed and it may not deliver the desired outcomes if the aims and objectives are not clear.

It is important therefore to manage partnerships effectively and efficiently with regular monitoring and review.

The principal purpose of this strategy is to provide a robust framework and action plan that will ensure that the council adopts a proactive approach to partnership working in seeking to achieve its policy objectives and long term vision.

The term partnership as defined by the Audit Commission is used to describe a joint working arrangement where the partners:

- Are otherwise independent bodies
- Agree to co-operate to achieve a common goal
- Create a new organisational structure or process to achieve a goal.
- Plan and implement a jointly agreed programme, often with joint staff or resources
- Share relevant information; and
- Pool risks and rewards.

Why work in partnership

Working in partnership can be a productive way of achieving more efficient and effective use of scarce resources. However the primary purpose for working in partnership must be to meet the policy aims identified in this strategy. The four policy aims are:

1) Supporting the councils corporate objectives & priorities

The council has *four priorities* (See appendix A). These priorities represent the council's principal business development aims. In seeking to deliver its business development aims the council adopts a number of delivery mechanisms, a direct service delivery role, an enabling role and a facilitating role. Maximising effective partnership working is central to the council's enabling and facilitating roles in delivering services.

2) Improve social, environmental and economic well-being of the borough.

With the introduction of the Local Government Act 2000 and the duty placed on local authorities to promote the social, economic and environmental well being of its area, Castle Point Borough Council is becoming increasingly concerned and involved in complex cross cutting issues such as Community Safety, Economic Regeneration, Health Improvement and Social Inclusion. These issues cut across the boundaries of several organisations and as such no one organisation could possibly rise to the challenges addressing these issues presents, only through working in partnership can the issues be properly tackled. The Castle Point Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) and its LSP Executive is a key vehicle in achieving this in Castle Point.

3) Meet Government requirements

Central government is increasingly placing statutory duties on local agencies and organisations to work together in partnership. Community Safety and Health



Improvement are high on the government's agenda for partnership working. The introduction of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) has begun to foster close community working through the LSP as the delivery vehicle for meeting local aspirations and government requirements.

4) Assist our partners to meet their objectives (where they would be to the benefit of the community of Castle Point).

This covers partners such as the Health Service, the Probation Service and non local authority Housing Services. Partnerships such as the South Essex Thames Gateway Partnership, and the Castle Point Crime and Disorder Partnership have been established to enable agencies and organisations to collectively bid for resources, which may not be available to single organisations.

Partnership Strategy - Good Practice

a) Resourcing a partnership

The resourcing of partnerships is a complex issue. The council needs to give careful consideration to what resources it will need to invest in order to support and sustain the partnership. Resources can be one or a combination of three sources. They can be financial, non financial (such as equipment) or human. Before the council commits to any partnership a full assessment of the direct, indirect and opportunity costs of the partnership should be carried out. The Service Manager with advice and guidance from the Financial Services Unit should carry out the assessment.

In many instances of partnership working the council will be contributing Officer time to the partnership. The Service Manager when considering this issue needs to ensure that the time and cost of all staff engaged in partnership working are monitored and accounted for in the department's Service Plan. Similarly where the council makes a direct financial contribution to a partnership or is subject to either an increase or reduction in revenue stream, this should be identified and accounted for in the department's annual Service Plan.

As part of the council's Financial Planning Strategy at both the Corporate and Departmental level the council should clearly identify those partnerships that need funding and allocations should be made centrally to support the council's partnership work.

In addition to the allocation of financial resources, the council should give equally careful consideration to the human resource investment to partnership working. Service Managers need to ensure that the right officers with the right technical skills, level of expertise and seniority are assigned to the partnership so that the partnership has the full backing of the council.

b) Supporting partnerships

It is important that the correct support and administrative infrastructure is in place to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the partnership. Advice and guidance should be sought from the Legal Department and the Financial Services Unit to ensure that an appropriate and robust legal and financial operating framework and support infrastructure. Key elements of the support structure that need to be in place are:

- The Constitution of the partnership.
- Agreed Terms of reference that clearly defines what are the partnerships aims and objectives as well as defining the respective roles and responsibilities of the partners.
- A clearly defined management structure showing how the partnership will be managed on a day-to-day basis.
- A clearly defined reporting mechanism both within the partnership and to its parent organisation. This will need to be tied into the council committee structure.
- A clearly defined decision making process that takes account of the parent organisation's processes.
- A clearly defined consultation strategy.
- Clearly defined and understood communication systems.
- A clearly defined monitoring and review programme in place to protect the council's interests.

c) Measuring Performance of a partnership

Although a challenging task, partnerships must find ways of measuring their success if they are to justify a continued existence. Any partnerships in which the council is involved should be evaluated to ascertain whether or not the work of the partnership is having the intended impact in terms of the council's corporate objectives and priorities and to ensure

that the partnership remains accountable to their own organisations and their stakeholders, who are the intended beneficiaries of their actions.

Having identified the main objectives of the partnership, the council should turn these objectives into definable outcomes. These outcomes should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic and **T**ime framed (S.M.A.R.T). The use of numerical performance indicators is a useful tool in providing quantitative data against which to judge the success or failure of a partnership. Where the desired outcome is of a more qualitative nature for example improvement in the quality of life issues, then the council should look to extract that information from user surveys, focus groups, user panels, complaints or feedback systems.

d) Financing partnerships

The councils financial regulations which offer reassurances to the public about how public money is being used, may not apply in full to all the partnerships in which the council participates. Even where one partner acts as the lead agency, managing resources and staff and there is a greater level of public reassurance, it may still be unclear both to individual citizens and to other organisations, who is really responsible for making sure that public money is being used properly and effectively. As partnership working expands, the “fit” between existing regulatory regimes and cross-organisational working arrangements will require attention. The council through the Executive Management Team will need to give careful consideration on how to bring involvement in partnership work within its corporate governance arrangements, particularly establishing respective liabilities, internal and external audit work on financial probity.

e) Evaluating, monitoring & reviewing partnerships

The council needs to examine the Value for Money provided by the partnership work it does. A key question for the council and its stakeholders must be “Are the extra benefits that come from working in partnership greater than the costs involved in doing so? If the answer is “Yes”, then the council is providing “Value for Money”. If the answer is “No” then the council should not be in the partnership. Most partnerships have a combination of

both direct and opportunity costs. The main opportunity costs for the council are the significant proportion of Senior Officer time spent in meetings and/or engaged in supporting work for the partnership. The council must quantify these opportunity costs. Without doing so it is impossible to weigh these costs against achievement and demonstrate that the partnership is delivering good value for money.

Maintaining accountability within the partnership, to the partnership stakeholders, the service users and the public are all key considerations in reviewing the success of a partnership. The use of public meetings, planning day's electronic and physical networking are all techniques used to inform accountability issues in partnership working.

f) Rationalising partnerships

The council recognises that partnership working is not a panacea for all situations and circumstances and that there will be instances when partnership working may not be appropriate. To avoid the potential for wasted time, effort and resources the council must have clear and unambiguous rationale for deciding when and when not to work in partnership. That rationale must first and foremost be based on the ability of the partnership to help the council achieve its policy objectives. That having been decided the council must then decide how the partner agency or organisation will make its' contribute to achieving this aim.

As a part of the rationalisation process the council needs to concentrate on those partnerships that will really make a difference and reduce its involvement in those that partnerships that do not. To achieve this the council must review all its current partnerships in line with the questions posed in Appendix B. This should also enable the council to identify any gaps in its partnership working and to focus its efforts on establishing the most beneficial partnerships.

g) Formal contractual partnerships

Earlier in the strategy it was highlighted that the council has three distinct means of delivering its services in support of its policy aims. Namely direct service provision, its enabling role and its facilitating role. A key delivery mechanism in support of the councils enabling role is through the use of formal contracts. The council works in partnership with an agency or organisation, which is legally contracted to provide either a service to the council itself or to the council's customers on behalf of the council. In return the council pays the "contractor" a pre determined fee. The use of formal contracts and external contractors by the council as a means of service delivery is becoming more widespread. This "outsourcing" of services provides for a more "arms length" form of partnership operating within a clearly defined and relatively rigid legal framework. Unlike the non-contractual partnerships discussed earlier, these partnerships are subject to formal rules and regulations of procurement and engagement and the council is not entirely at liberty to choose its partners. The councils "financial regulations" and "contract standing orders" provide the legal framework within which the choices can be made. However the guiding principles for entering into such partnerships are the same as the non-contractual partnerships. The council's Information & Communications Technology Service (ICT) currently provided by the private company Steria is on the basis of this outsourced formal contractual agreement.

Partnership Strategy – Implementation

Officer Level

1) Corporate Approach

The council has established a Partnership Team who are responsible for the management and co-ordination of the council's partnership programme. The Partnership Team proactively seeks out partnerships that further the council's policy objectives and ensures that best practice is disseminated, co-ordinates work with different partners and reviews and reports on total resources deployed on partnerships.

2) Service Level

- All departments conduct an annual comprehensive review of all existing partnerships in which they are involved. The review is guided and informed by the key questions raised in Appendix B
- All departments involved in partnership working have clearly identified areas of partnership working with the associated resource implications in their Service Plans.
- Each department has identified lead officers responsible for each partnership area (i.e. health, economic regeneration, conservation etc)
- All departments before entering into new partnerships will apply the guidelines set out in Appendix B and more recently in the Partnership Toolkit.

3) Elected Member

The council's Elected Members have a key role to play in relation to the establishment of partnerships and partnership working. Members are responsible for agreeing Council's policy and therefore this strategy.

- There should be Member representation on all of the council's key corporate and strategic partnerships.
- Members should through the committee process carry out a robust scrutiny role annually reviewing the achievement of all of the council's corporate and strategic partnerships.
- Member agreement and support should formally be sought for all corporate and strategic partnerships or those, which have substantial resource implications, or significant direct/indirect costs.

4) Other Councils

The council must maximise its partnership working with neighbouring councils. The council is currently working in partnership with Southend on Sea Borough Council for the provision of a joint Head of Audit Post, and with Rochford Council through its links with many partnerships, and a joint Partnership Support Officer post. Similarly the council is working with Essex County Council who is providing the council's payroll service. More partnerships of this type need to be developed.

Current Partnership working

The council is currently engaged in a range of partnerships operating at a number of different levels. Below are some examples

Corporate/Strategic Partnership

- Castle Point Local Strategic Partnership
- Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership
- Castle Point Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership
- Castle Point & Rochford Drug & Alcohol Reference Group
- Healthy Castle Point Partnership Board
- Essex Drug Action Team
- Service Partnerships
- Essex Waste Strategy Forum
- Essex Chief Leisure Officers Group
- Essex Chief Housing Officers Group
- Essex Chief Environmental Health Officers Group

Appendix C attached gives a more detailed account of some of the council's partnerships and Appendix D gives a comprehensive list of partnerships.

Appendix A

The Council's Priorities are:

Environment – Civic Pride

Outcomes

- Clean streets, well maintained “green” areas, good street lighting
- Recycling facilities, children’s play equipment
- Air quality and traffic management
- Planning policies leading to acceptable development

How to deliver

- Increase/Improve/redeploy resources to front line street scene functions including the monitoring and enforcement of refuse collection.
- Speedier removal of abandoned vehicles, litter and fly tipping
- Partnership working – delivering leisure
- Education/publicity/incentives and initiatives e.g. sponsored litter picking, sponsorship by local businesses, more planting in the Borough, campaigns to promote off street parking.
- Promote local identity e.g. crest for road signs
- Improved outdoor leisure facilities
- Extend the street cleaning to an Out of Hours service
- Provide more/better located dog bins and enforce dog fouling penalties

Regeneration and Homes

Outcomes

- The creation of more local employment
- Regeneration of Seafront, Town Centres and Industrial Estates
- Support systems for the creation of business opportunities
- Provision of affordable housing for local people

How to deliver

- Partnership working through The Castle Point Regeneration Partnership
- Housing policy – affordable homes, Housing Stock Transfer for Decent Homes, equity loan scheme, enforcement of habitable property use of Brownfield sites and maintaining the green belt. etc
- Secure funding for infrastructure/roads and industrial estates improvement
- By a united understanding and common vision

Improving the Council

Outcomes

- Improvement in Council management and every Council service performance

How to deliver

- Improvement Plans through Improvement Boards
- Performance Management Framework
- External support e.g. use of consultants etc
- Staff and member development to capture new skills and improved induction procedures.
- Learn & share best practices with other local authorities and benchmark
- Encourage staff participation and reporting of problems in the area
- Continue to improve communication and inter-departmental relations
- SMART use of resources linked to risk management e.g. lone working
- Better control of contractors and suppliers
- Prioritise complaints within a structured complaints management process
- More involvement of blue collar workers in corporate decision making e.g. better management and improved resources
- Meet Government targets for performance initiatives
- Members activity to reflect agreed Council priorities
- Introduce and publish a Citizens Charter
- Achievement recognition for contribution by Council staff
- Service availability, CRM etc
- Introduce more guidance documents for officers e.g. planning design
- Consultation – internal and external
- Avoid diversions from agreed Council priorities
- Implementation of service plans
- Media management

Community Safety

Outcomes

- Decreasing local crime and anti-social behaviour
- Increasing the perception of being able to lead normal life without the fear of personal attack, burglary or vandalism.

How to deliver

- Work together
- More regular meetings with Police focused on the real issues identified by residents.

- With schools to promote acceptable behaviour
- Partnerships that are focused on visible activity with collective responsibility.
- Community contributions e.g. surveys, questionnaires
- Meetings with vulnerable groups e.g. residents of sheltered accommodation.
- Speedier removal of abandoned vehicles , graffiti, litter, fly tipping and vandalised street furniture leading to enhanced environmental conditions (better street scene = less crime)
- Continue to provide diversionary activities for young people.
- Continue to develop Community Policing role together with improved street lighting and CCTV
- Develop Noise Abatement Policy and enforcement
- Review town centres e.g. the provision of gaming centres.

Appendix B

PARTNERSHIP WORKING – SOME KEY QUESTIONS

Below are some key questions the council should be asking when reviewing its existing partnerships and before setting up any new partnerships. (See Partnership Toolkit for full list of questions.)

DECIDING TO GO INTO PARTNERSHIP

1. Does the organisation have a clear and sound reason for being in this partnership
2. Are changes in behaviour or in decision making processes needed to avoid setting up a partnership with only limited success

ESTABLISHING A PARTNERSHIP

3. How are prospective partners identified
4. Does the partnership have an executive group that all partners trust to make decisions on their behalf
5. Do all the partners have an appropriately structured board or other decision-making forum

OPERATING EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY

6. Do partners share the same main objectives
7. Are the partnership objectives consistent with those of the partner organisation
8. Do partners know where the boundaries between the activities of the

partnership and their own organisation lie

9. Are project planning techniques used to ensure the separate agreement of all the partner's to a course of action in good time, when necessary
10. Is the partnership prepared to delegate responsibility for parts of their work to particular partners
11. Have partnership staff been selected for their technical competence's and for their ability to operate both inside and outside conventional public sector framework
12. If members have dropped out of a partnership, lessons should have been learned about how to maintain involvement in the future
13. Can partnership decisions be implemented effectively
14. Have positive and discrete actions been taken to build and maintain trust between partners
15. Is the partnerships accountable to the individual partners, external stakeholders, service users and the public at large

REVIEWING SUCCESS

15. Does the partnership have a shared understanding of the outcomes that it expects to achieve, both in the short and long term
16. Has the partnership identified their own performance indicators and set jointly agreed targets
17. Has the partnerships identified the means of measuring the progress of the partnership towards expected outcomes and the health of the partnership itself
18. Has the partnership clearly identify the direct, indirect and opportunity costs of the partnership
19. Are the partnership costs being actively monitored and weighed against the benefits the partnership delivers

Appendix C

Current examples of partnership working in Castle Point Borough Council

The Local Strategic Partnership

Castle Point LSP is a partnership that brings together the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to work together to improve the economic, social and environmental well being of the Borough. The LSP takes a strategic overview of the Borough and plans for the provision of services and facilities to improve the quality of life for the whole of the community.

The LSP has the following aims;

- Preparing and implementing the Sustainable Community Strategy for the Borough
- Developing and updating action plans to achieve the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy
- Ensure that the Sustainable Community Strategy achieves its objectives
- Identifying and responding to the needs of the Borough
- Reducing duplication and bureaucracy between partners
- Promoting social inclusion and equality

The Partnership has a cost to all partners in the production of the Sustainable Community Strategy and officer time. However, there should be savings in the long term with joint working and better sharing of resources.

South Essex Thames Gateway Partnership

The Council is engaged in a major economic regeneration partnership with the neighbouring local authorities of Rochford, Basildon, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock



along with the Thames Gateway to develop schemes to regenerate parts of South Essex. The partnership which seeks to deliver a range of projects of strategic importance over a twenty year period, supports a number of the council's corporate objectives namely: encouraging economic vitality, ensuring an efficient and effective transport system, keeping our Borough green and clean and promoting a healthier community. There is both a direct and opportunity cost to the council in supporting this partnership.

Friends of Woodside Cemetery Groups

A partnership between the council and a group of volunteers with an interest in the upkeep of the cemetery. The group advise the Council on operational issues which are used to inform the work within the cemetery. The partnership supports the council's aim of securing advantage for the residents of Castle Point through the reduction in vandalism etc through the volunteer presence. There is no direct cost to the council but there is an opportunity cost through officer time in attending meetings, although the cost has not been quantified.

South East Essex Primary Care Trust

SEE PCT has recognised the work of the Council in assisting to improve the health of the local community and the Council has an officer on the Executive Board which enables the local authority and PCT to agree local targets for tackling health inequalities together.

Castle Point Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

The Council is required to produce a Crime Reduction Strategy in partnership with organisations known as the Responsible Authority Group, a statutory group of individuals tasked with providing a strategy capable of achieving sustainable crime reduction within the Borough.



The partnership development of the strategy is a fairly new approach to reducing crime and disorder, as what had traditionally been seen as the sole domain of the police service is now being tackled collectively by a “consortium” of professional and statutory agencies. No longer a case of the police investigating crimes and hoping to arrest the offender or dispensing crime prevention advice but the application of an holistic approach to reduce the opportunities for criminals, alleviate some of the social and causal factors of criminal conduct and generally improve the quality of life for Castle Point’s community.

The primary objectives outlined in the Strategy, with its comprehensive programme of work, is taken forward by this multi-agency group. It meets bi-monthly, not just to review progress against published timescales but, equally importantly, to continually look at new ideas and initiatives, some of them tried successfully elsewhere, that will bring real benefits to the community and further enhance the aims and objectives set out within the Strategy. It also monitors central government funding provision in case there are potential projects which, with financial constraints removed, could be taken forward.

APPENDIX D

COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF PARTNERS

Castle Point Local Strategic Partnership
Employment, Skills and Business Partnership
Healthier Communities, Older People Partnership
Castle Point Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
Children and Young Persons Strategic Partnership
Stronger Communities Partnership
Community Sport's Network
Thames Gateway South East (TGSE)
 Thames Gateway- Quality of Life Board
 Thames Gateway Social Regeneration Forum
 Thames Gateway Waste Procurement Partnership
 Thames Gateway Strategic Housing Group
Castle Point Regeneration Partnership
Essex Drug Action Team
Castle Point and Rochford Drug and Alcohol Reference Group
Essex County Council
 ECC- Emergency Planning
 ECC- Waste Collection & disposal
 ECC-Community Safety
 ECC- HR forum
 ECC- Youth Service
Essex County Council and all of the other LA's
Primary Care Trust
ENCAMS
Essex Fly Tipping Policy Group
CAVS: Castle Point Association of Voluntary services
Castle Point Social Car Scheme
Anchor Housing Home Improvement Agency
Essex Police - Responsible Authority Group
Primary Care Trust (Includes Joint Health Board; Health Improvement sub committee; Teenage Pregnancy Group; South Essex Coronary Heart Group;
Castle Point Wildlife Trust
Essex Wildlife Trust
Friends of Woodside Cemetery
Writtle Agricultural College
Essex probation service
Basildon District Council
Cleanaway Canvey Marshes Trust
North Benfleet Hall Wood
Glaredawn properties
Castlevue Lodge

South East Essex Dial a Ride
Museums in Essex Committee
Schools
Canvey Island Youth Project
Castle Point Sports Council
Legacy XS
Police
Rochford District Council
Castle Point CAB
Job Centre Plus
Pension Service
Rent Service
Valuation Office
Appeals Service
CIPFA Benefits Consortium
CIPFA Revenues Consortium
CIPFA Benchmarking Group
Essex Revenues Group
Essex Benefits Group
Benefits Network
IBS
DWP Central Fraud Investigation Service
National Fraud Initiative
National Anti Fraud Network
Local Authority Investigations Group
Magistrates' Court
County Court
Environment Agency
Essex Planning Officers' Association
Essex Wildlife Trust
LABC
Primary Care Trust
RSPB
SASPAC
Crossroads Care
Steria
Southend Borough Council