



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

Meeting and date: Executive Committee, 13 July 2022

Report title: Partnership Governance Update

Lead Member: Councillor Matthew Walsh

Report sponsor: Mark Hemming, Director of Finance and Assets

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Action: Noting

Recommendations: That Members note the content of this report.

Executive summary:

In May 2014, the Executive approved a partnership strategy including a set of nine key principles that need to be determined to justify any relationship with another body as a true partnership.

In carrying out this review a formal Partnership Register was established together with a separate list of joint working groups and other forums attended either by officers and/or Members of the Authority that do not meet the fuller criteria for a true partnership.

Within the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20, one of the governance issues to be addressed in 2020/21 was identified as being the need to update the review of external partnerships to ensure that:

- partners maintain the same high standards of conduct with regard to financial administration and corporate governance that apply throughout the Authority
- they are evaluated and contribute to the achievement of the Authority's objectives

This issue was carried forward into the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21, and this report addresses the outstanding action.

Appendix 1 provides details of partnerships added to or removed from the register since the previous update.

Appendix 2 outlines the timescale, governance and rationale for each of the partnerships.

Financial implications: There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Risk management: As set out in Section 20 of the Financial Instructions: Each partnership should have a defined responsible manager within the Authority. This person is responsible for ensuring that:

- The partnership is appraised for financial viability in both the current and future years;
- The financial risk to the Authority is assessed;
- Appropriate resources are assigned to the governance of the partnership;
- The partnership is supported by an appropriate documented agreement which outlines the financial liabilities and accountabilities of the partners, together with procedures for financial transactions and monitoring, and which has been agreed in writing by all partners; and
- The accounting arrangements are satisfactory.

The Director of Finance & Assets must be consulted, and their agreement obtained to the acceptability of the details in respect of the above prior to commencement of the Partnership.

Legal implications: The Authority's Financial Regulations (E.2) provide that "The Executive is responsible for approving partnership arrangements/joint working initiatives with other local public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations to address local needs."

Privacy and security implications:

Agreements between the Authority and third parties set out the respective obligations as data controllers or data processors (as the case may be) consistent with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Duty to collaborate: The Service works collaboratively to achieve effective partnership working with Thames Valley Police and/or South Central Ambulance Service. These collaboration arrangements are monitored and reported via the governance boards of the Thames Valley Collaboration program. Joint working arrangements are generally not captured in the register unless they result in a formal partnership agreement.

Health and safety implications: There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.

Environmental implications: There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion implications: There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

Consultation and communication: No direct impact.

Background papers:

- Partnership Governance Update, Executive Committee, 7 February 2018 - https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/03/070218_exec_committee_agenda.pdf/ (pp. 113-125)
- Annual Governance Statement 2019/20, Overview and Audit Committee, 22 July 2020 - <https://bucksfire.gov.uk/documents/2020/07/item-9-annual-governance-statement-2019-20.pdf/>

Appendix	Title	Protective Marking
1	Key Changes Since the Previous Update	
2	Partnership Register	

Appendix 1 – Key Changes Since the Previous Update

New Partnership Arrangements

Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company (FRIC)

At its meeting on 12 December 2018, the Fire Authority approved the Authority's participation in the pooling arrangement for its corporate property, liability, motor, and other miscellaneous insurance requirements for a minimum period of three years through FRIC with effect from 1 April 2019.

The Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company (FRIC) is an entity formed by other fire and rescue authorities, to act as a pool for insurance purposes. The Company was set up to provide an alternative to traditional insurance and give member fire and rescue authorities greater control over the cover provided and the management and settlement of claims.

Under the pooling arrangements all the participating fire and rescue authorities share financially with each other, on a proportionate basis, the cost of establishing a pool fund from which any loss incurred by an individual member of the insurance pool would be met.

Integrated Voice and Data Network (WAN/LAN)

A joint venture agreement between Buckinghamshire Council, Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust and Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group was established in 2020 to provide a shared integrated voice and data network for all services.

The Service has since jointed the partnership to benefit from improved economies of scale when transitioning from its current voice and data network provider to this new arrangement.

Partnership Arrangements Removed from the Register

Oxon FRS/RBFRS – Cross Border Arrangements

Although cross border arrangements remain in place, the arrangement has been removed from the register as it is in place due to statutory arrangements.

Training Partnership – Fire Service College

Although this agreement is often referred to as a partnership, it is primarily a commercial contractually arrangement, and has therefore been removed from the register.

KFC – Primary Authority Advice and Cineworld – Primary Authority Advice

These arrangements remain in place, and although they fall under the Primary Authority Partnership Scheme, the risk is not shared in a way that would define the arrangement as a partnership for the purposes of this exercise.

Appendix 2 – Partnership Register

Partnership Name	Original Signing Date	Is the partnership legally defined and agreed by all partners?	Where does it fit within the Fire Authority plan?	Are there clear aims and outcomes for the partnership?	Are the outcomes measurable and agreed by all partners?	Is the risk shared as well as the resources?	Date of last review by all partners	Could the outcomes be achieved in any other manner?	Is there an exit strategy/ should the Authority require one?
Safer MK	Not known	Crime and Disorder Act 1998	Vision and Strategic Objectives	Yes	In Part	Yes	Annual	No	No/No
Safer & Stronger Bucks	Not known	Crime and Disorder Act 1998	Vision and Strategic Objectives	Yes	In Part	Yes	Annual	No	No/No
MK Safety Centre	2010	Yes	Strategic Objectives and Local Plan	Yes	Yes, Activity. Outcomes, No.	Yes (Limited)	Annual	Potentially	Yes/Yes
Fire Co-responder	1/03/14	Yes	Vision and Strategic Objectives	Yes	Yes	Yes	Annual	Not by using fire crews as co-responders	Yes/Yes
British Red Cross	2012	No	Prevention	Yes	N/A	Yes	2014	Yes, but at a greater cost	Yes/Yes
Thames Valley Fire Control Service	2015	Yes	Response - steady state operation of the TVFCS	Yes	Yes, as set out in primary objectives	Yes	Spring 2022	Yes, but it would be more costly	Yes/Yes
Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company	2019	Yes	Value for Money	Yes	Yes	Yes	Reviewed annually at AGM	Yes - commercial insurance provider	Yes/Yes
WAN/LAN	2021	Yes	Value for Money	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes – direct award, but would be more costly and less resilient	Yes/Yes