



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	DSFRA/09/14
MEETING	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	27 MAY 2009
SUBJECT OF REPORT	FRAMEWORK FOR PARTNERSHIP WORKING
LEAD OFFICER	Head of Corporate Support
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That, subject to any amendments as may be agreed at the meeting, the Framework for Partnership Working as enclosed (page numbered separately with the agenda for this meeting be approved.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>Partnership working has become central to the delivery of effective services to meet local needs and all public sector organisations are now expected to work closely together. Partnership working offers many benefits and opportunities but it also involves risks and can place additional demands on the Authority's capacity.</p> <p>Enclosed (page numbered separately) with the agenda for this meeting is a draft Authority Partnership Framework designed to secure sound governance arrangements for partnership working which are in accordance with the Authority's Corporate Governance Code. However, it is expected that the framework will be modified over the coming months as feedback on its use is assessed to determine where improvements can be made.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	Nil.
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	No potentially negative impact sufficient enough to warrant a full impact assessment has been identified in the content of this report.
APPENDICES	Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority Framework for Partnership Working
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	<p>A Fruitful Partnership: effective partnership working (1998, Audit Commission)</p> <p>Developing Productive Partnerships (2002, Audit Commission/District Audit)</p> <p>Governing Partnerships: Bridging the accountability gap (2005, Audit Commission)</p> <p>Fire and Rescue Service partnership working toolkit for Local Area Agreements (2008, Communities and Local Government)</p> <p>Working better together? Managing local strategic partnerships (2009, Audit Commission)</p>

- 1 Partnership working has become central to the delivery of effective services to meet local needs and all public sector organisations are now expected to work closely together. It is widely recognised that partnership working has the potential to help:
 - deliver strategic objectives;
 - deliver services and effective operational performance;
 - improve quality and cost effectiveness;
 - ensure best use of scarce resources; and
 - deal with issues that cut across geographic and agency boundaries and where mainstream programmes alone cannot meet the need.
- 2 Partnership working offers many benefits and opportunities but it also involves risks and can place additional demands on the Authority's capacity. The Audit Commission, in its 2005 report *Governing Partnerships*, found that a third of organisations working in partnerships experienced problems arising from weak governance and accountability arrangements.
- 3 It is widely recognised that there is no one-size-fits-all model of governing partnerships so governance arrangements should be proportionate to the risks involved. The purpose of a framework for partnership working is, therefore, to provide a structured and proportionate approach that will enable the Authority to manage and review partnership working in such a way that will ensure its engagement in partnerships provides both improved outcomes for the community and value for money
- 4 The proposed framework for partnership working enclosed with the agenda for this meeting (and page numbered separately) has been developed following extensive research into reports produced, mainly by the Audit Commission, over the last ten years and examples of notable practice from other public authorities (including several fire and rescue authorities). It is expected that the framework will be modified over the coming months as feedback on its use is assessed to determine where improvements can be made. A key requirement will be to align the framework to the Authority's business management systems and process to ensure that information flows inform and support effective decision-making and that levels of controls are appropriate.
- 5 The Community Safety and Corporate Planning Committee has delegated authority to approve new partnerships in accordance with this framework. The Audit and Performance Review Committee will receive an annual partnership monitoring report and provide challenge as to the effectiveness of partnerships' contribution to achieving the Authority's strategic priorities and delivering value for money. It will also scrutinise the partnership monitoring arrangements as required by the Authority.
- 6 This framework provides sound governance arrangements for partnership working which are in accordance with the Authority's Corporate Governance Code. The Authority is asked to consider these arrangements as set out in the framework and make comments as appropriate with a view to approving the attached framework.

MIKE PEARSON
Head of Corporate Support