

## **GRAVESHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL**

# **Corporate Register of Partnerships and Shared Working Arrangements**

**July 2021**

A summary of partnership and shared working  
arrangements

## **Performance & Administration Portfolio**

# Gravesham Borough Council

## Register of Partnerships and Shared Working Arrangements

### – July 2021

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#### Introduction

The council maintains a comprehensive register of its partnerships and shared working arrangement that is reviewed on an annual basis.

#### Partnerships

The council defines a partnership as ***“an agreement between the Council and one or more independent bodies to work together to achieve the council’s Corporate objectives”***.

In addition to this, the council also splits the partnership register into ‘Significant’ and ‘Key other partnerships’. In order for a partnership to be classified as significant it must meet the following definition:

***“A partnership for which there is a council resource provision of £50,000 or greater or one that is fundamental to the delivery of a corporate objective as established within the council’s Corporate Plan. Without this effective partnership therefore, the delivery of Gravesham Borough Council’s key corporate goals would not occur. This will also include those partnerships that have been established to deliver legal or statutory requirements on behalf of the council.”***

#### **Shared Working Arrangements**

In addition to partnership working, the council also has a number of shared working arrangements in place which range from a full-shared service with another local authority to shared manager/officer arrangements. The council is currently involved in the following shared working arrangements:

<b>Page Ref.</b>	<b>Name of Partnership</b>
3	Audit & Counter Fraud Shared Service
5	Revenues & Benefits Shared Management Arrangement

#### **Glossary of Terms (Page 7)**

Throughout the document, there are a number of terms that are used and it was felt that it would be useful to provide a ‘Glossary of Terms’ in order to provide further clarification of some of the terminology used within the document.

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<b>Name of Partnership</b>	<b>Audit &amp; Counter Fraud Shared Service</b>
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Sarah Parfitt, Director (Corporate Services)
<b>Lead Member(s)</b>	Councillor ,Narinderjit Singh Thandi Lead Member for Performance and Administration
<b>Statutory Status</b>	Local authorities statutorily required to have internal audit.
<b>Aims and objectives of partnership</b>	<p>The Audit &amp; Counter Fraud Shared Service was established on 1 March 2016 to provide internal audit, counter Fraud and investigation services to Medway Council and Gravesham Borough Council. The work of the service for Gravesham is driven by an annual plan, agreed with the Finance &amp; Audit Committee in March of each year.</p> <p>The vision of the service as set out in its Strategy, agreed with the Finance &amp; Audit Committee in March 2018, is to “deliver high quality assurance, consultancy and counter fraud work to help ensure the authorities meet their objectives. We will act as a catalyst for driving positive change, promoting improvement, learning and innovation so that we can truly add value. By investing in our staff and working to raise our profile, we aim to become the default and respected advisor and critical friend at the heart of Medway Council and Gravesham Borough Council”.</p>
<b>Expected outcomes</b>	<p>The Shared Service has achieved the following outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced cost of the Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Service to each council, taking into account any reductions in funding arising from the introduction of the Single Fraud Investigation Service.</li> <li>• Increased resilience.</li> <li>• Increased efficiency through adoption of best working practices and sharing of audit and fraud resources.</li> <li>• Maximising the opportunities presented through sharing a large common boundary, and dealing with similar day-to-day issues.</li> </ul>
<b>Links to GBC Corporate Objectives</b>	<p><b>Objective #3 Progress</b></p> <p><i>An entrepreneurial authority; commercial in outlook and committed to continuous service improvement, underpinned by a skilled workforce and strong governance environment.</i></p>
<b>GBC Resources (financial, officer, assets etc)</b>	<p>As set out in the Shared Service agreement, approximately 36% of these resources are directed towards delivering the Audit &amp; Counter Fraud Plan for Gravesham.</p> <p>The Shared Service agreement sets out the budgeted cost to Gravesham for 2021-22 as £209,667.</p> <p>The team occupy space in the Civic Centre, though all ICT hardware is provided by Medway Council.</p>
<b>Partnership membership</b>	Gravesham Borough Council and Medway Council.
<b>Governance arrangements</b>	<p>The Shared Service Agreement in place sets out the governance of the service;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• S151 responsibilities in relation to the provision of internal audit have been delegated from Gravesham to Medway.</li> <li>• Schedules set out scope of services, service standards, reporting requirements and financial contributions.</li> </ul>
<b>Financial reporting arrangements and timeframe for reporting</b>	<p>Gravesham Borough Council is invoiced on a quarterly basis by Medway Council as host of the Shared Service.</p> <p>The expenditure budget for this arrangement is monitored through the council’s internal budget monitoring processes and reported via the established financial reporting arrangements.</p>

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<b>Performance monitoring arrangements and details of formal review of partnership arrangements.</b>	<p>The Shared Service has established a suite of performance measures and arrangements to report on the outputs and performance of the team to the council's Management Team and Finance &amp; Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>The council's Annual Governance Review and Statement considers the effectiveness of internal audit arrangements.</p>		
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	<p>The Shared Service has a business plan and risk register in place for the delivery of its services.</p>		
<b>Safeguarding Obligations</b>	<p>There are no direct safeguarding obligations for this service; however, the assurance activity undertaken by the service does look at various services and their management of their safeguarding obligations.</p>		
<b>Equalities Obligations</b>	<p>There are no direct equalities obligations for this service; however both partners are committed to developing opportunities for inclusion and cohesion.</p>		
<b>Climate Change Considerations</b>	<p>Both Councils in the partnership have climate change objectives as part of their corporate plans. While the shared service does not directly contribute to these objectives and obligations, Internal Audit will be providing independent assurance over climate change projects and the work of services contributing to the objectives.</p>		
<b>Date Partnership Created / Approved by Cabinet</b>	<p>1 June 2015: Cabinet approval given for the partnership to become a full shared service.</p> <p>1 March 2016: Shared Service launched.</p>	<b>Date Partnership Terminates (if applicable)</b>	N/A

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Name of Partnership	Revenues & Benefits Shared Management Arrangement
Responsible Officer	Sarah Parfitt, Director (Corporate Services)
Lead Member(s)	Councillor Narinderjit Singh Thandi, Lead Member for Performance and Administration
Statutory Status	Non-statutory partnership
Aims and objectives of partnership	To jointly manage the Revenues & Benefits Teams of Gravesham Borough Council and Medway Council to provide savings while delivering an effective service.
Expected outcomes	<p>The key aim of the partnership is to provide a high quality, value for money service that improves benefits administration performance and maximises revenues collection rates whilst maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the joint management arrangement will increase the resilience for the two authorities with opportunities for staff being able to assist at either authority should the need arise, and subject to the relevant approvals being sought at each site.</p> <p>Other benefits will be the ability to continually take the best practice arrangements from each council which should help to ensure the efficient delivery of a high quality service.</p>
Links to GBC Corporate Objectives	<p><b>Objective # 1 – People</b>  <i>A proud community; where residents call a safe, clean and attractive borough home.</i></p> <p><b>Objective #3 Progress</b>  <i>An entrepreneurial authority; commercial in outlook and committed to continuous service improvement, underpinned by a skilled workforce and strong governance environment.</i></p>
GBC Resources (financial, officer, assets etc)	<p>Gravesham Borough Council makes a regular payment to Medway Council, for the services of the Head of Revenues &amp; Benefits and Revenues Manager employed by Medway Council. These officers provide managerial support to the overall Revenues &amp; Benefits Team and the specific Revenue team on a 50:50 basis. The financial contribution for 2020-21 was £73,180.</p> <p><b>GBC Assets</b> – whilst onsite at GBC, the Head of Revenues and Benefits and the Revenues Manager will utilise desk space, IT computer network and telephone resources.</p>
Partnership membership	Gravesham Borough Council and Medway Council
Governance arrangements	A formal Shared Management Agreement is in place which sets out specific requirements of the arrangement including details of the job profiles and financial contributions to be made. It also includes details of performance monitoring and dispute resolutions, should this occur.
Financial reporting arrangements and timeframe for reporting	The cost of the arrangement is included in the Shared Management Agreement; Gravesham Borough Council agrees to pay 50% of the cost of Medway Council employing Head of Revenues & Benefits and Revenues Manager.
Performance monitoring arrangements and details of formal review of partnership arrangements.	<p>A Shared Management Agreement is in place to set the requirements for the joint-management arrangement and performance monitoring; although it is down to the responsible officers to implement a monitoring framework to meet the needs of the service.</p> <p>In addition, all shared working arrangements are kept under at least an annual review, with the results of these reviewed reported to the relevant Committee.</p>

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<b>Risk Assessment</b>	<p>Given that this is still a relatively new shared management arrangement, there remains the potential risk that the Revenues and Benefits Section may suffer some reduction in performance due to the Shared Managers not being on-site full time. That being said the past year has seen benefit performance well above both National and Kent averages despite the Covid-19 pandemic. Revenues collection has reduced but again at a less rate than the National average. Officers are able to access GBC IT systems from Medway and staff are aware that they can be contacted at either authority. It is anticipated that this risk has been mitigate as far as possible at this time but will continue to be monitored. Monthly performance reports are circulated to management and Portfolio holder to highlight any major areas of concern to enable action to be taken as necessary and quarterly performance management information is provided to Members.</p>		
<b>Safeguarding Obligations</b>	N/A		
<b>Equalities Obligations</b>	<p>The shared management arrangement, as a service provider incorporates its equalities obligations in all of its reports, processes and policies. It undertakes impact assessments for any changes to its services in accordance with Gravesham Borough Councils policies. Any identified negative impact in terms of the nine protected characteristics will be investigated fully to identify how these can be mitigated or managed. Complaints are closely monitored and used as a learning mechanism to ensure that decisions undertaken are fair to all customers. Any identified negative impact in terms of the nine protected characteristics is investigated fully to identify how these can be mitigated or managed.</p>		
<b>Climate Change Considerations</b>	<p>Both partnership member councils are committed to reducing the impact of Climate Change. Consequently, the shared management arrangement supports the council's ambitions by providing advice/support on revenues and benefits policies (specifically discounts or incentives for council tax payers and rate payers) in support of Climate Change considerations.</p>		
<b>Date Partnership Created / Approved by Cabinet</b>	01 October 2019	<b>Date Partnership Terminates (if applicable)</b>	N/A

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**Glossary of Terms**

To provide assistance to officers, Members and members of the public when reading the council's Corporate Register of Partnerships, a **Glossary of Terms** has been developed to provide additional information about the meaning of some of the words included within the register.

<b>Term Used</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>Annual Governance Review</b>	This is a review that is undertaken each year in order to assess the council's overall governance arrangements.
<b>Audit &amp; Counter Fraud Plan</b>	The Audit & Counter Fraud Plan is a document which sets out the work plan for the team for the forthcoming financial year.
<b>Business Plan</b>	A business plan is a formal statement of a set of business goals, the reasons they are believed attainable, and the plan for reaching those goals.
<b>Corporate Plan</b>	A document which sets out Gravesham Borough Council's corporate priorities for a period of years and provides details of the actions to be undertaken towards achieving those objectives.
<b>Shared Service Agreement</b>	This is a document which is signed by those authorities participating in a share service and sets out the governance arrangements for the shared service.
<b>Significant partnership</b>	A partnership for which there is a council resource provision of £50,000 or greater or one that is fundamental to the delivery of a corporate objective as established within the council's Corporate Plan. Without this effective partnership therefore, the delivery of Gravesham Borough Council's key corporate goals would not occur. This will also include those partnerships that have been established to deliver legal or statutory requirements on behalf of the council.