

Partnership Working Update Report

Report by: Kenneth Lawrie, Chief Executive, Midlothian Council

1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the progress of the joint partnership working activities/initiatives undertaken as part of the partnership working agenda across East Lothian and Midlothian Council.

2 Background

- 2.1** The continued exploration of Partnership Working is seen as one of the options available to respond to the challenges facing both Councils. A key benefit offered by this approach is the opportunity for increased capacity for both Councils. At a time of constrained budgets both authorities recognise the need to consider new and alternative ways to provide quality services and other provisions to their respective communities and agreed to work together to identify opportunities which could lead to increased effectiveness and efficiencies in terms of both practice and capacity and which could potentially safeguard services.
- 2.2** Whilst early partnership working focussed on Education and Children's Services, the current activity focuses on a range of opportunities which are considered to be of benefit to both councils. As noted in previous reports the development of a partnership framework for staff across both authorities has laid the foundations for a number of joint initiatives and it is this approach which has been adopted as the model for Partnership Working across East Lothian and Midlothian Councils.
- 2.3** The activities carried out to date has resulted in significant sharing of best practice and strong working relationships, including a joint approach to the national Early Years Collaborative activity.
- 2.4** In addition to the existing governance framework for partnership working i.e. Partnership Working Board reporting to the Joint Liaison Group, regular joint monthly meetings with both Chief Executives and their Director's/Depute Chief Executive's ensure that partnership working opportunities are a regular feature of discussions between both authorities.

3. Current Position

- 3.1** The current joint partnership working activity is as follows:

- **Contact Centre** – East Lothian continues to host Midlothian's Out of Hours service following an arrangement with its Contact Centre in 2010.
- **Archaeology Service** – a refreshed Service Level Agreement remains in place between East Lothian and Midlothian for archaeology services support provided by East Lothian which is subject to an annual review.

- **Early Years** – both councils initially agreed to a joint approach to the national Early Years Collaborative programme and whilst the nature of the joint approach has altered over the course of the programme the opportunity for collaborative sharing and learning continues with more partnership awareness and joint learning.
- **Health & Safety** – Midlothian leads on a joint managerial arrangement in place for the Health and Safety function which continues to progress well and has benefitted from joint policy and management arrangement development which in turn has reduced duplication of effort across both councils in this area. Joint training has continued and the teams are currently exploring further opportunities for joint training linked to the joint management arrangement development.
- **Self Improving Schools** –the introduction of the concept of Self Improving Schools across the 12 secondary schools has created four learning trios (learning sets) consisting of three secondary schools, supported by a set adviser. The Head Teachers create learning contracts and progress and share learning across the sets.
- **Public Protection Unit** – Following the Critical Services Oversight Group's (CSOG) approval, a joint approach to public protection across East Lothian and Midlothian is in place within the co-located unit based at the Brunton Hall, Musselburgh. The Public Protection Office had its official opening during the week commencing 20th April 2015 and Police colleagues are now in situ. The Public Protection Committee is well established, as is the Performance and Quality Improvement sub group who have now devised an East & Midlothian Public Protection Performance Framework which has an overview of child protection, adult support & protection, violence against women & children and offender management improvement plans
- **Travelling Persons Site** – A joint arrangement exists for the management of the Travelling Persons Site which is located on the joint boundary of both Councils.
- **Internal Audit** - Discussions have also taken place between the respective Directors and their teams to explore opportunities for sharing information and good practice.
- **Travel** – A report has recently been approved for a joint bus route to replace the former 328 service.
- **LEADER Programme** – Joint approach to European funding bids. Both councils developed and implemented the programme on behalf of Tyne/Esk Local Action Group (LAG - community and stakeholder reps) Leader+ programme 2002-07 and then LEADER programme 2007-13. For the 2014-20 period there is more of a focus on community-led local development and so the role of LAG is paramount. However both councils remain strongly involved with Midlothian agreeing to be lead accountable body for 2014-20 (previously ELC for both programme periods) but the Local Development Strategy & Business Plan have still to be approved by

Scottish Government and these documents are currently being developed.

- **Support Services** - areas where increased collaborative discussions have taken place include:
 1. **IT Services** –discussions involving relevant senior managers from both authorities, in addition to regular joint senior IT management meetings which have been looking to take stock of the collaborative working undertaken to date and identify any opportunities for taking further steps towards partnering.
 2. **Legal Services** – early discussions relating to seeking to establish reciprocal support arrangements for the provision of cover at Edinburgh Sheriff Court are underway with the intention that a mutually beneficial solution might be found. Presently Midlothian is in the process of in sourcing court work following an internal service review.
 3. **HR Services** – the respective senior HR Managers have been maintaining a regular dialogue on a range of operational matters, largely sharing problems/solutions rather than a pursuit of more integrated working.
 4. **Equality Officer** - sharing an Equalities Officer for Maternity Leave cover. The Midlothian Equalities Officer is providing this service for both Councils.

3.2 Both Councils agreed to the development of a pilot partnering approach to delivering Environmental Health and Trading Standards Services, commencing on 1 November 2013. The pilot exercise for this activity, which included introducing a joint management arrangement across both Councils was introduced and has recently been reviewed. A further report presented to the Joint Liaison Group advised that the pilot arrangement for Environment Health ended on the 31 March 2015 and that the management arrangements in place were due to end on 31 May 2015. The report also advises of the proposed way forward for Trading Standards. In the case of Trading Standards the experience of the pilot partnership, the external national context, and the outcome of substantial discussion with the staff in both Councils, indicates that joining together to form a single Trading Standards service can be regarded favourably. Accordingly, work is ongoing to examine issues relating to governance, location, resourcing, and operational working practices with a view to recommending a move to a partnership service within the next six months.

3.3 Whilst a joint managerial arrangement is currently in place for the Health and Safety function, which has benefited from joint training and systems training, further examination regarding the existing arrangement to include Emergency Planning is being considered and an update report will be provided in the summer.

3.4 Both authorities are scheduled to submit reports to their respective Council meetings in relation to the Roads Collaborative project led by the Improvement

Service which proposes a joint approach with Edinburgh, Fife, West Lothian and Scottish Borders. The reports will seek members' commitment to and support of the proposals. The proposal is to introduce a governance framework which allows East Lothian and Midlothian Councils to identify and make the best use of their collective resources together with other participating councils.

- 3.5** It is clear from the ongoing discussions that there is a desire and requirement across both Councils to work together to identify opportunities for further development which offer beneficial outcomes for communities across both authorities. Continuing to work and focus on specific short, medium and long term outcomes will further enhance the partnership model across the authorities and enable the inclusion of additional partners as appropriate.

4. Next Steps

Whilst continuing to build people's capacity to work together for a number of the partnership working initiatives, the Partnership Working Board, with agreement from Council, will be tasked to continue to work jointly in a planned and timely manner to support the current budget challenges and to make savings/efficiencies in a way which supports sustainable provision of services going forward.

5. Report Implications

5.1 Resource

The organic 'Partnership Working' arrangement approach will draw on staff time but will focus on delivering benefits for an agenda which is common across both authorities, with the expectation of freeing up capacity and reducing duplication resulting in more effective and efficient practices.

5.2 Risk

Continuing to explore partnership working arrangements with both councils will ensure that services are provided in accordance with best value principles as effectively and efficiently as possible. A pre-requisite to any partnering arrangement is that the Council's resilience in these areas at least should be maintained and, if possible, should be improved.

5.3 Ensuring Equalities

This report has no direct impact on equalities. However, activities resulting may affect people and these will be individually Equality Impact Assessed.

6. Summary

This report updates members on the range of partnership working activities which have been undertaken across council services in East Lothian and Midlothian. A principle which has been followed in all of these deliberations has been to seek opportunities which will enhance the quality of service delivery and/or allow

service delivery levels to be sustained in the light of current and future budget reductions. Key to this process is the alignment of practice and policy thereby enabling continued development of more substantial partnership activities in the future.

A significant feature of all of the partnership activity has been the willingness of staff to engage in the process and working together to jointly address the challenges presented by increasing demand and reducing budgets.

7. Recommendations

Council is asked to:

- a) Note and approve the current position regarding Partnership Working activities

Date: 05 June 2015

Report Contact:

Name: Myra Forsyth, Joint Partnership Manager

Tel No: 0131 271 3445

E-mail: myra.forsyth@midlothian.gov.uk