

Key Contracts and Partnerships Framework



WORKING TOGETHER

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Revision History			
Version Number:	Review Date: (dd/m/yy)	Summary of Actions:	Author:
1.0	2024	First version produced under a shared framework across both councils.	Caroline Winstanley
2.0	2025	Refreshed shared framework approved by Cabinet for South Ribble on 8 October 2025 (effective date 17 Oct) and for Chorley 16 October 2025 (effective date 24 Oct).	Justina Ma

Introduction

At Chorley and South Ribble Councils we are committed to working with other organisations such as public sector bodies, businesses, voluntary and community groups, social enterprises and faith groups, to support the delivery of high-quality services and the achievement of borough priorities. Collaboration helps to bring together varied skills, ideas and resources to achieve results.

The council may consider collaborative working arrangements when:

- It will help deliver strategic objectives and the council's corporate priorities
- It will help deliver council services
- The council could not achieve the outcome if acting alone
- It can help lever funding (in this instance, consideration of the External Funding Strategy should also be applied)
- It delivers value for money and increased efficiency in the use of council resources
- It reduces reputation risk and strengthens organisational resilience.

Since 2009, there has been a shared working arrangement in place across Chorley and South Ribble councils, which includes a shared management structure and some shared services. Additionally, the council has in place other contractual and non-contractual agreements and partnerships which help us to serve the public.

The framework ensures that we take a proportionate approach to safeguarding the success of our collaborative working arrangements by identifying and monitoring the contracts and partnerships that are extremely important for council operations and, if not managed effectively, could negatively impact on the delivery of outcomes for our communities.

Definitions

Contract

Contracts are legally binding agreements. They outline the terms and conditions of an agreement between two or more parties (usually for the exchange of goods or services), the responsibilities and obligations of each party and the consequences of non-compliance. Non-contractual agreements refer to agreements that are not governed by a formal contract and are not legally enforceable between the parties involved.

Partnership

Partnerships are mutually beneficial arrangements between organisations with aligned interests. For the purpose of this framework, the council has adopted the broad definition of partnerships used by Chartered Institute of Public Finance and

Accountancy (CIPFA): ‘An agreement between two or more independent bodies to work collectively to achieve an objective, normally excluding the familiar relationships between client and contractor or employer and staff.’

Application

This framework only applies to key contracts and partnerships. The following working arrangements are not included within the remit of the framework:

- provision of grant funding to external organisations for a specific purpose.
- arrangements where the council is commissioned to deliver services on behalf of another organisation e.g. Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Combined County Authority.
- external bodies where a council representative has been invited to take up a position on the governing board.
- arrangements whereby the council pays a subscription or membership fees for a service e.g. Co-operative Councils Innovation Network, Local Government Association.

Criteria

The following criteria determines if a working arrangement is a key contract or partnership. Three or more criteria must be met.

- **Financial** – costs the council £180k or more per annum.
- **Corporate Priorities** – will significantly impact the delivery of one or more of the Council’s corporate priorities.
- **Service Delivery** – will significantly impact service delivery of one or more Council services.
- **Statutory** – it is required, permitted or enacted by law.
- **Risk** – there is a high amount of strategic or operational risk, which has been identified within the Council’s Strategic Risk Register and / or Service Level and Project Register. For example, significant disruption to core services and systems.
- **Length** – lasts for five or more years.
- **Resource** – there will be a large reliance on the proposed partner/contractor for service delivery.

Governance

Key contracts and partnerships are subject to more robust governance, monitoring and reporting arrangements. The required elements for effective governance are set out below.

- **Aims and objectives**; there should be a common vision and agreed objectives that are aligned with the Council’s strategic objectives.

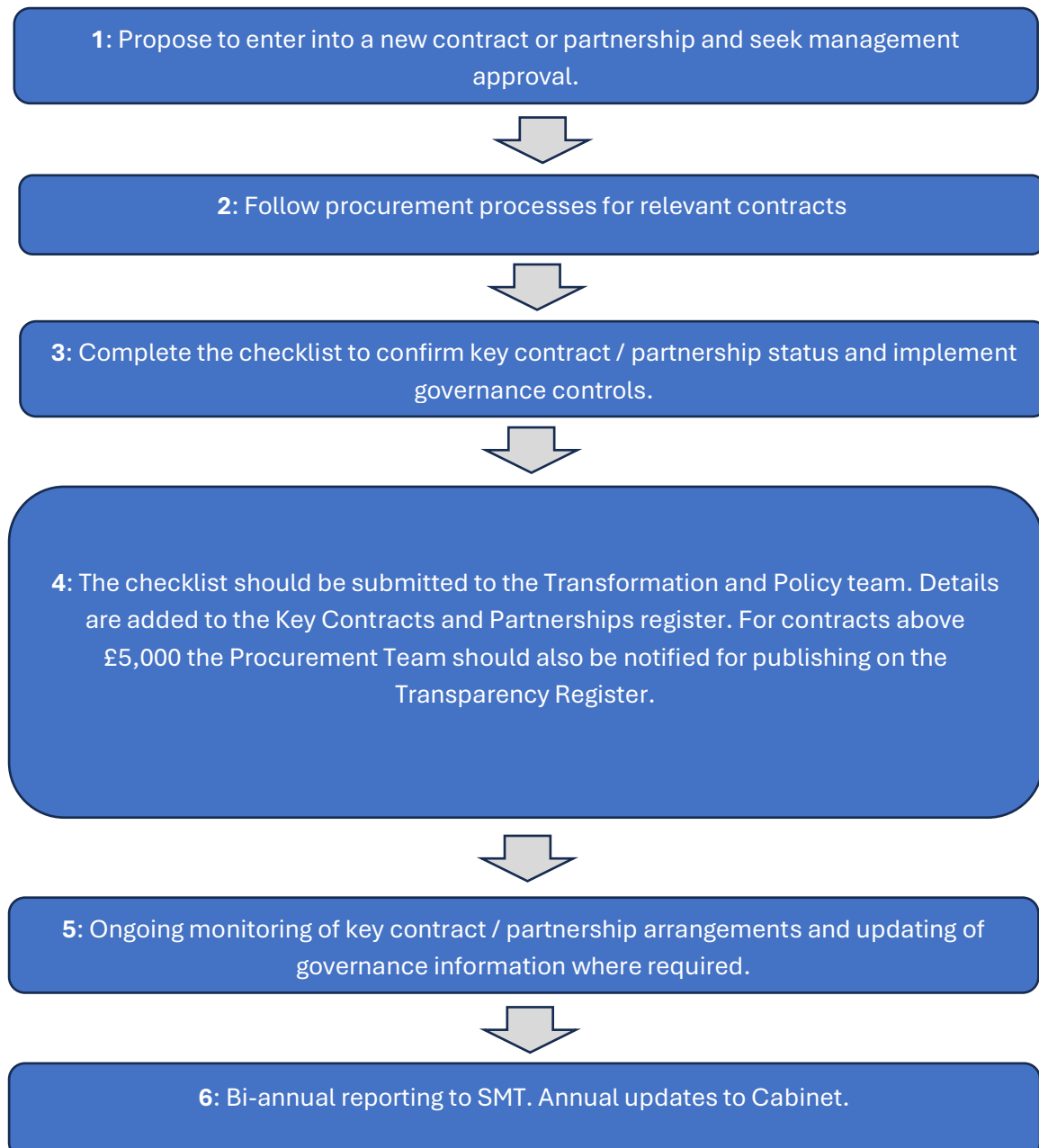
- **Roles and responsibilities;** there needs to be defined roles and responsibilities that should be supported by clear reporting lines and a decision-making framework.
- **Decision making procedures;** Representatives for key contracts or partnerships should have sufficient authority to commit their organisations to a particular course of action. There needs to be alignment with the Council's decision-making processes and timetables to enable decisions with significant policy or financial implications to be planned carefully and executed effectively.
- **Project / Change Management;** where appropriate, the council's project management framework should be implemented to support delivery.
- **Risk management:** good risk management is key to delivering successful outcomes and risks should be captured in a joint risk register.
- **Equality and diversity monitoring (includes Integrated Impact Assessment);** Active consideration for the principles and benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion including assessing impacts to ensure fair treatment and equality of opportunity.
- **Anti-Fraud and corruption;** partners of the Council and all companies with whom it is contracted, will be fully informed of the procedures the Council has in place to combat fraud.
- **Data quality:** it is critical that any information or data supplied to or by the Council to make decisions, allocate resources, support delivery, or monitor performance, is robust with relevant data sharing and data quality protocols in place.
- **Whistleblowing policy:** key contractors or partners providing services on behalf of the Council should either have their own whistle blowing arrangements in place or adopt the Council's.
- **Safeguarding vulnerable adults and children;** the Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and to delivering services for children and vulnerable adults that promote best practice. It expects representatives, colleagues and partners to share this commitment. Partners should refer to the Council's safeguarding policies and guidance on protection procedures alongside the roles and responsibilities of the Council's representatives.
- **Business continuity arrangement:** there should be effective, relevant business continuity arrangements that are maintained throughout the life of the partnership or contract.
- **Dispute prevention and resolution controls;** formal written agreements should contain agreement variation and dispute resolution mechanisms so that if problems arise, they are resolved quickly and amicably.
- **Exit strategies;** there should be a clear exit strategy for all key contracts and partnerships in order to mitigate the financial, reputational and other risks that could materialise. Notice periods and exceptions to notice periods should also be included.

Register of Key Contracts and Partnerships

In line with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, councils are required to publish details of contracts above £5,000. The Council's Procurement Team produces a Transparency Register which is updated on a quarterly basis and published on the councils' websites.

Key contracts and partnerships are required to be added to a separate Register. The Key Contracts and Partnerships register is overseen by the Transformation and Policy Team and is updated on an ongoing basis as new key contracts are identified. It is published on our website.

Process



The council's Procurement strategy applies to contracts involving the purchase of goods, works and services for the Council.

To confirm that a working arrangement is a key contract or partnership, you should evidence how it meets the relevant criteria and governance requirements.

A governance checklist is included in Appendix A.

Your record of the key contract or partnership must be approved by a Head of Service / Director. A copy of the governance checklist should then be shared with the Transformation and Policy team who will take responsibility for adding the key contract or partnership to the register.

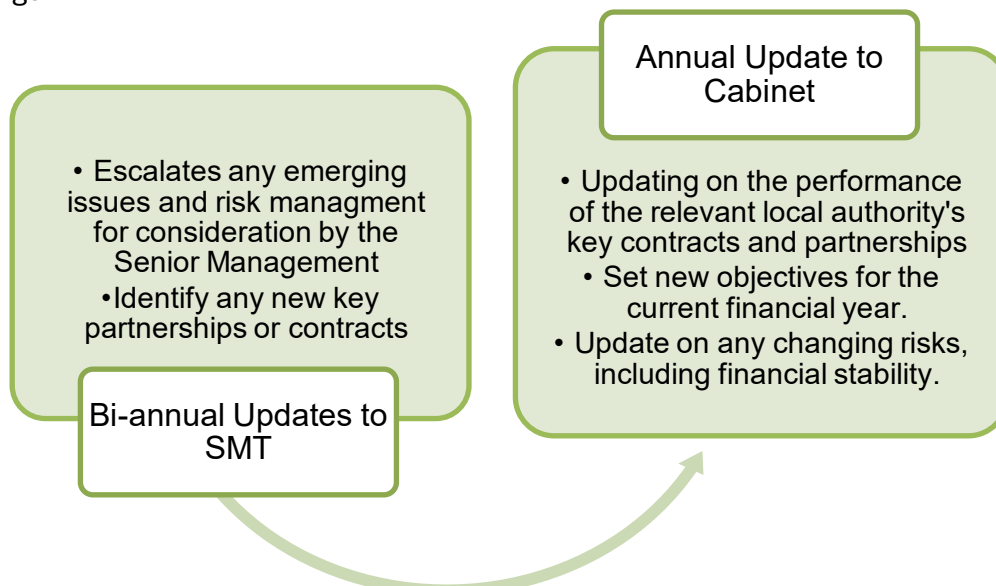
Monitoring and Reporting

Key contracts and partnerships should be managed and monitored at a service level through ongoing operational meetings, board meetings and updating executive members as general good practice.

In addition to this, formal monitoring and reporting will take place through:

- Bi-annual reviews to check that the working arrangements remain relevant and effective. Consideration will be given to:
 - Any new key contracts and partnerships
 - Changes to existing key contracts and partnerships
 - Governance arrangements and assurance – a review of the governance checklist should take place,
 - Risk management and mitigation,
 - Contract / Partnership Priorities and Progress in Delivery.
- Bi-annual reporting to SMT, highlighting changes to the key contract and partnerships register, any issues arising and mitigating actions.
- Annual update to the Cabinet/ Executive Cabinet of each Council.

The Transformation and Policy Team will co-ordinate the review process, collecting updates from Responsible Officers and preparing the reports for SMT and Cabinet meetings.



Summary of Key Roles

Who	Role and Responsibilities
Cabinet / Executive Cabinet	Receive annual updates on the Council's key contracts and partnerships.
Senior Management Team	Ensure implementation of the Key Contracts and Partnerships Framework. Maintain overview of key contracts and partnerships, ensuring that they are appropriate in supporting the councils' strategic priorities, key risks are managed, and arrangements are resourced effectively.
Directors/ Heads of Service	Oversight and approval of any new key contracts and partnerships. Ensure existing contracts and partnerships are managed effectively within the parameters of this framework.
Responsible Officers	Identify need for new contracts and partnerships. Determine if contracts and partnerships are key. Should have strategic and operational insight and be one of the main contacts for that key contract or partnership. Feedback to relevant colleagues on agreed goals and progress in delivery of key contracts and partnerships. Support the reporting and monitoring cycle, ensuring regular reviews of key contracts and partnerships are undertaken.
Transformation and Policy team	Coordinate the framework and support services in its implementation. Maintain the register of key contracts and partnerships. Preparing reports to SMT and Cabinet/Executive Cabinet.
Procurement team	Provide support and advice on procurement strategy and best practice. Publish contract award details and maintain the Transparency Register.
Legal and Finance team	Provide advice on new key contracts and partnerships proposals. Finance – undertake credit checks on key contracts.

Appendix A – Governance Checklist for Key Contracts or Partnerships

Criteria	Summary
What is the collaborative working arrangement?	
Is it a key contract or partnership?	
On what basis is it key? Three or more criteria must be met. Financial – costs the council £180k or more per annum. Corporate Priorities – will significantly impact the delivery of one or more of the Council’s corporate priorities. Service Delivery – will significantly impact service delivery of one or more Council services. Statutory – it is required, permitted or enacted by law. Risk – there is a high amount of strategic or operational risk, which has been identified within the Council’s Strategic Risk Register and / or Service Level and Project Register Length – lasts for five or more years. Resource – there will be a large reliance on the proposed partner/contractor for service delivery.	
Aims and objectives	
What is the proposed function and purpose? Is there a shared vision and agreed objectives?	
How do the intended outcomes and benefits support strategic priorities and service delivery?	
Roles and Responsibilities	
Have alternative delivery arrangements been considered? Why is this the preferred option and how will it add value to current working arrangements?	
Who is involved? Who will lead?	
What will the role of the council be?	
How will it be resourced?	
Are there links to other existing partnerships?	
How will outcomes be defined and monitored? How will performance be tracked and reported?	

Decision making procedures	
What are the reporting arrangements?	
Who will be responsible for decision making?	
Will there be a Terms of Reference, Memorandum of Understanding or contract drafted and signed by all relevant parties?	
Project / Change Management	
Where appropriate, has the Council's project management framework been applied?	
Risk management	
For key contracts, has a credit check been undertaken?	
Are there any risks and how will these be managed?	
Has a risk assessment been undertaken and entered onto GRACE?	
Equality and diversity monitoring	
Has an equality impact assessment been carried out? How will arrangements value diversity, ensure fair treatment and equality of opportunity?	
Data quality	
What protocols are in place to support data and information sharing? A robust DSA should be in place where required.	
Anti-Fraud and corruption	
What measures are in place to combat fraud?	
Whistleblowing	
Is there a whistleblowing policy in place?	
Safeguarding vulnerable adults and children	
Is there a commitment to safeguarding vulnerable people and children with appropriate policies and protection procedures in place?	
Business continuity	
What arrangements are there to ensure business continuity?	
Dispute prevention and resolution controls	
How will problems arising be resolved quickly and amicably? Are there agreement variation and dispute resolution mechanisms in place?	

Exit strategies

Is there a clear exit strategy that mitigates financial, reputational and other risks that could materialise? Notice periods and exceptions to notice periods should be included.