PART 1 – POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Fire and Rescue National Framework (2012) details the national requirement for fire and rescue services to work in partnership with communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver services and manage community risk via prevention and protection. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service) strategic objectives reflect this. The Service objectives are to develop the organisation, protect local communities and respond to emergencies. The Service's ability to deliver these objectives and its services is affected by the complex and changing partnership landscape it operates within both locally and nationally.

1.1 PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP POLICY SCOPE & OBJECTIVES

This policy provides the scope for partnership working with other agencies and is intended to facilitate a partnership with purpose approach. Key partners are vital to delivering the Prevention department's objectives as they support provision of services in line with departmental need and include (but are not limited to) home fire safety, arson reduction, road safety, working with children and young people and health and wellbeing.

The primary reason why we work in partnership with others is to deliver the best outcomes for our communities and the best services possible. Other reasons include; maximising the use of limited resources, building capacity, enhancing delivery and sharing information and good practice. Partnership working can also build capacity by challenging the Service to think differently, and see and try new ways of engaging communities. Skills development and fresh ideas often emerge through partnership working along with forging new contacts, enhancing reputation and input to networks. Partnerships which consider and promote equality and diversity are also central to eliminating barriers that prevent access to services, information and employment.

PART 2 – PROCEDURE

2.0 PROCEDURE

To ensure the Prevention department maintains a partnerships with purpose approach, lead managers are responsible for the management of the partnerships they are involved in, including keeping partnership documentation up to date and accessible. The Partnership Toolkit (the toolkit) and Cheshire Planning System (CPS) underpin this and should be utilised to document the identification, outcomes, milestones, risks, review and evaluation of partnerships. The expectation being that these will be utilised by all staff engaging in or attending partnership meetings or representing the Prevention department or the Service as a partner agency. The manager responsible for general oversight of the toolkit is Head of Prevention. Regular oversight and monitoring of prevention partnerships documented via the Partnership Toolkit and supporting documents will be completed by the Partnership Coordinator on behalf of the Prevention team. An annual report will be provided to Fire Authority Members who have principal responsibility for the oversight of partnerships at Performance and Overview Committee.

UTILISING THE PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP TOOLKIT –

To streamline the processes involved in the Prevention team's partnership work, the Partnership Toolkit (located on CPS) should be utilised prior to a partnership starting.

The Partnership Toolkit can help to establish the parameters of partnership working and to decide whether the partnership should commence and/or continue. The application of the toolkit, particularly at the beginning, determines how the partnership meets strategic objectives, the type of partnership, the role we play and the challenges we might face.

Risks attached to any partnership should be identified in the initiation document and the management of the risk reviewed at least annually, via the completion of the partnership review documents. Risks and their management should also be recorded on CPS under the risk tab in “Partnerships”. You should consult with your line manager regarding any partnerships where you have identified a significant risk and/or multiple threats/weaknesses within the potential/ongoing partnership. Any risks scoring a total of 15 or more on the risk matrix should be recorded on the Corporate Risk tab located within CPS and updates regarding the management of the risk provided regularly.

Exemptions to the utilisation of this toolkit exist. Formal groups such as membership of the sub region, to National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Local Government Authority (LGA) are statutory, therefore are justified by governance arrangements and you do not need to complete this process, although a record of the named contact officer and other basic details should be reflected in the Partnership Register. Those relationships covered by contract management obligations (e.g. procurement partners) are governed by the business contracts that support them, therefore are not included in this process.

2.1 PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP REGISTER

The Partnership Register is located on the Cheshire Planning System (CPS). Information will automatically populate onto this once you have created a new partnership on the system.

The register provides a snapshot of essential information relating to the partnerships that the department is currently involved in, those we have participated in previously, why we are involved and the named contact for the partnership. This register automatically populates from information entered into the CPS, therefore CPS must be updated each time a person is involved in a new partnership, when any of the parameters of it change, if the lead contact changes and after review, evaluation and closedown of the partnership. Review of the register to look for current partnerships within Prevention and the contacts associated with these can help you to identify associates you could contact in relation to the work you are completing.

2.2 INITIATION OF A PARTNERSHIP

The Partnership Initiation document is useful at the beginning of a partnership. It helps determine reasons for embarking on a partnership, and considerations whilst developing the partnership. It also helps to identify any documentation which may be required to support the partnership going forward. Considerations when commencing a partnership should include how it supports the department's aims and objectives, the strengths it will bring, any potential risks or weaknesses, equality and diversity, the type of partnership, the resources required, the role of the department and how often and what type of collaborative review will occur (e.g. quarterly meetings, telephone conference etc.).

You should take advice from the legal team on the most suitable form for the partnership to take, in preparing the relevant documentation and for advice on documentation being put forward by other organisations inviting the Service to enter into a partnership.

Evaluation of the partnership as it continues is important to evidence the benefits, disadvantages and risks of the partnership. Reporting of outputs and outcomes is vital to establish at the beginning of the partnership and to review throughout its lifetime.

Any conflict of interest between personal interests and public duties should be identified by the Partnership Lead and considered at the beginning and during the lifetime of the partnership. Conflicts of interest can adversely affect a person's ability to deliver a partnership fairly and within the interests of the Service and the community it serves. Any potential conflict of interest should be reported to your immediate line manager and explored with consideration given to whether the role of Partnership Lead needs assigning elsewhere.

2.3 REVIEW & EVALUATION

Review and evaluation of a partnership is essential and should occur continuously throughout its lifetime, providing the department with important information regarding the:

- Effectiveness of its partnerships: how well do we perform in partnership, what works well, what could we improve, who do we work well with?
- The outcomes it is achieving: what benefits is the partnership bringing to the service, the communities we serve, are the benefits still being realised (e.g. has saturation of a population has occurred)?
- Learning for future partnerships: what could we replicate, what could we learn and improve on, what mechanisms work well, what type of partner works best with The Service?

Capturing your partnership via the toolkit forms, uploading supporting documents and recording updates via the CPS tabs aids resilience and continuity within the Prevention Department and helps evidence the reasons a partnership continues or ends.

You should consider and agree with your partner how you will review and evaluate your partnership at initiation. A template of the information you will collect together during the partnership should be created and also considered by the Head of Department prior to being finalised, this may change as the partnership evolves, you should be mindful that any changes you make might need to be formally captured.

The partnership review form should be completed at least annually, however a more frequent review may be beneficial, for example on time limited partnerships where outcomes need delivering within a year, a three monthly review may be more appropriate or if challenges within the partnership have been identified by either party. Regular review enables you to analyse the ongoing effectiveness of your partnership, its achievements and any new risks or threats which may need addressing.

The final evaluation form (on CPS) should be completed and a final report produced prior to the collaboration being terminated or just before (up to 3 months – any contract supporting partnership delivery may stipulate specific termination requirements). This information will provide important information to the Department in relation to further partnership working for example, was the partner reliable, were the objectives achieved, did outside factors influence the partnership?