



# **Dale & Valley Homes Partnership Strategy 2008- 2013**

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## 1. Introduction

In June 2006, the Board of Management of Dale & Valley Homes received a report on the Use of resources – Partnership Performance. The report highlighted the requirement of the Audit Commission that *“financial performance of partnerships is regularly reviewed, linked to outputs and the results shared with partners and acted upon.*

At the time of the report the following partnerships were identified:

- Wear Valley Customer Panel
- Residents Associations

Both Partnerships have written agreements which set out the relationship between themselves and Dale & Valley Homes.

## 2.0 Our vision, values and strategic objectives

Our **vision** and purpose is to provide:

“Homes and estates that people want to live in and are proud to live in”

The **values** that underpin this vision all centre on our customers:

- We will be honest fair and open in all we do.
- We will listen to our customers and treat them as individuals.
- We will maximise the benefits to customers of all available resources,
- We will achieve excellence and continue to improve.
- We will work with all partners to improve the lives of our customers.

Our four **strategic objectives** are:

- Delivering Excellent Services
- Delivering Decent Homes
- Running our Business Well
- Contributing to the wider Community.

## 3.0 What does “Partnering” mean to Dale & Valley Homes?

Partnerships are about sharing creativity, risk and responsibility and streamlining tasks to those best suited to do them. If partnerships are established well, the productivity of a partnership is higher than if each partner worked separately as a result of each partner doing what they do best. Partnerships are often part of statutory obligations; a realisation that good partnerships across a range of sectors do actually deliver services effectively.

The key characteristic of a Partnership is *‘the partners aim to achieve something they could not do alone by pooling skills and other resources. To do this they need a shared vision of their goals, and a way of working together which realises this ambition. This may involve a long-term formal structure or a shorter-term agreement’*

Partners come in all shapes and sizes. They make different kinds of commitment depending on what they are able to offer in time, money or people with skills. But they do make a clear commitment which is able to be written down.

People or organisations with an interest in what you are doing may be called Stakeholders. They may be a company, a voluntary or a statutory organisation who works along side the core project and who have a dedicated interest, or stake, in the enterprise. It will be important to them that the project succeeds.

People who have more than the interest of a Stakeholder are usually called Partners because that is what they truly are. Like Stakeholders, they may be a company, a voluntary or a statutory body. They give one or more of three main things: time, skills or money.

All these partners will, in reality, be people from organisations, e.g. Customers representing the Customer Panel, but if the organisations are written down as the partners, then people can come and go with the commitment from the organisation remaining firm.

Partnerships must be looked at through three different perspectives:

- The 'business' that the partnership is doing, i.e. the projects and the funding necessary to achieve its goals.
- The structure that binds the partners together, expressed in a constitution or agreement, meetings and procedures.
- The people involved. It is important to remember that people differ in personality type and ways in which they prefer to communicate and work. Some people can digest lengthy reports, others prefer diagrams. Some revel in committee work while others are much better at the essential networking that goes on between formal events.

A successful partnership has all three elements. People and a structure can end up as a talking shop if they don't have projects, a plan and some resources. People with great ideas and funding need to get organised. And it is no good having great plans, funds and a constitution if we don't have people with the necessary skills and confidence.

## **Effective Partnership**

For partnerships that work there needs to be:

- **Leadership** – where partners share a common vision and harness their energies to achieve more than they could on their own.
- **Trust** – Where partners are accountable, share risks and rewards fairly and support each other.
- **Learning** – Where partners continuously seek to improve what they do in partnership.
- **Managing for Performance** – Where partners put in place necessary practices and resources and manage change effectively.

## **Types of Partnerships:**

Different types of **public partnerships** may be formed; these include:

- Partnerships between local authorities – emphasising the greater focus on the citizen, with better use of technology and finding new opportunities for greater efficiency, pooling of expertise and scarce skills. E.g. Choice Based Lettings.
- Partnerships between local authorities, ALMOs and other public bodies to deliver services that make more sense from the users' perspective and enhance outcomes, and providing greater personalisation, e.g. social care partnerships.
- Partnerships between local authorities/ALMOs for joint procurement – better efficiency, reducing costs of procurement, including advisor costs, e.g. North East Centre for Excellence.

## **Partnering with the private sector**

Strategic service delivery partnerships (SSPs) with the private sector, if procured in the right circumstances, in the right way, will provide a significant improvement in performance and cost-effectiveness. SSPs offer a valuable alternative to conventional customer-supplier relationships for authorities striving to radically improve the quality of services they provide and they pave the way for world-class public service delivery. By contrast with traditional contracting service delivery partnerships aim to:

- take a long-term perspective on needs, costs and solutions;
- involve shared risks, costs and rewards;
- have agreed problem-resolution methods;
- have joint governance arrangements; and
- are capable of change and development

## **Partnering with the voluntary sector**

Local Authorities and ALMOs often form 'soft partnerships' with groups working in the voluntary sector. Such partnerships are valuable to Dale & Valley Homes in helping achieve our aims and objectives; however, they currently operate on an ad hoc basis and need to have clear and agreed aims, objectives and outcomes.

In the 'Value for Money' Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE) the following question is asked: *Are modern procurement methods and partnerships applied that result in demonstrable value for money and delivering outcomes that meet the needs of users and/or the community?*

Partnership working is a key element to achieving value for money. Dale & Valley Homes must be able to demonstrate that it proactively works with a wide range of both existing and potential partners and other providers to compare and evaluate processes, costs and outcomes and to develop further opportunities for Value for Money improvements. We must be able to show how we use the results to inform how we plan, deliver and recognise improvements.

Partnering arrangements should produce the following results:

- New and Better ways of working
- Greater impact
- More resources
- Reduced or shared costs
- Spread of risk

### **New and Better Ways**

- Innovation, new, more effective ways of doing things
- New perspectives and challenging views within the partnership
- Improved intelligence about needs and opportunities

### **Greater Impact**

- Increased benefits for people businesses or communities served
- Increased reach to disadvantaged populations
- Greater critical mass; ability to reach and deliver beyond the capabilities of any one.

### **More resources**

- Attract public funding where policy requires partnership bids and evidence of partners working together to deliver joint projects
- Strengthened negotiating power.

### **Reduce / Share costs**

- Pool resources
- Share costs of common functions (in promoting and delivering services)

### **Spread risks**

- Complementary strengths, resources and perspectives
- Greater flexibility within a team

### **Potential partners:**

Dale & Valley Homes might wish to consider the potential for additional partnerships. In doing so it will be important to consider the following:

- Who else offers what we do?
- What other organisations are involved in helping our client group?
- Which organisations could do more of what they do by adding our offices/work space as a location for their work?
- Which organisations could help in planning different aspects and /or activities of our work?

### **Effective Partnerships:**

The Audit Commission' Bulletin – Developing Productive Partnerships, identifies three critical issues:

#### **Performance**

- How do you build the sort of relationships that deliver improvement?
- How will you know if your partnership is making a difference?

#### **Inclusion**

- How will you actively involve all partners you need to reflect different perspectives in the local community?
- How do you make partnership working attractive to both public organisations and private business?

#### **Probity**

- To whom is the partnership accountable and how can we ensure that public money is being properly spent?
- What formal monitoring and appraisal systems do you need to have in place.

## **4.0 Links to other Strategies**

The Partnership Strategy links directly to the Dale & Valley Homes' 'Value for Money Strategy' and ' Procurement Strategy'. Government policy seeks to ensure that smaller housing companies form partnerships to seek wider improvements in the housing and construction sector. The strategy also complements the Council's 'Protocol for Partnership Working'.

## **5.0 Objectives of the strategy**

Four objectives have been identified in support of this strategy:

1. to establish a register of partnerships

Our Business Plan 2008 – 2013 includes several actions in support of the objective: “ *establish a register of partnerships*”

The Business Plan makes reference to our key partners e.g The Customer Panel and Wear Valley District Council, but also refers to the fact that although we are a can do, will do organisation there are some services our customers need that we are not experienced enough to deliver. In these instances we rely on other service providers to help us deliver some of these services to our customers.

During 2007 we have been developing Procurement and Value for Money strategies which have resulted in the establishment of new partnerships. It is important for us to have a comprehensive record of the partners we work with and the services / outcomes they deliver.

## 2. to have a partnership assessment tool in place

We currently have contractual partnerships in place. Dunelm Property Services working with us to deliver the Decent Homes programme were selected through a formal tendering process which considered amongst other things, value for money, quality and outcomes for customers. We have agreed the performance monitoring framework in respect of these Contractual partnerships.

Our partnership with Customers is monitored through the Compact Review process, however, there will be other partnerships which we may be invited to join or wish to set up which will need to be assessed to determine the resources required and the expected outcomes for the Company and its stakeholders. To achieve a consistent approach to partnership evaluation, monitoring and value for money it will be necessary to introduce an evaluation process along the lines of the Decision Making model approved by the Board in February 08

## 3. to ensure that partnerships are developed which reflect the different perspectives and priorities in local communities and achieve value for money

We recognise that alone we cannot deliver the range of services needed in our neighbourhoods. Our Business Plan objectives include a priority to involve customers and stakeholders to help deliver excellent services and makes specific reference to partnership working in order to deliver outcomes.

## 4. to explore opportunities for developing new partnerships where value for money can be demonstrated

We are a relatively small organisation and our ability to attract additional funding through our management fee is strictly limited, therefore, sharing skills, knowledge, staff resources, etc with other agencies and stakeholders will be necessary in order to improve existing services and develop new ones; whilst achieving value for money.

### **6.0 Review**

A Partnership Action Plan has been developed which highlights the major areas for development over the coming 6 to 12 months with the aim of embedding Partnership principles across the Company's operations. Progress against the action plan will be reported to the Board on a six monthly cycle.

This strategy will be reviewed annually as part of the process of developing subsequent years' Business Plans.

## 7. Action Plan

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Establish a register of partnerships	Identify existing partnerships and agree review process and timescales	July 08	Director of Housing Operations
Agree formal monitoring and appraisal systems	Develop arrangements for monitoring and reviewing how well partnership service aims and objectives are being met	August 08	Director of Housing Operations
Ensure that partnerships are developed which reflect the different perspectives and priorities in local communities	Identify customer priorities for service delivery and use customer profile information to assess partnership options	Sept 08	Director of Housing Operations
Explore opportunities for developing new partnerships	Explore/identify the gaps in service delivery and the opportunities for service development and improvement	November 08	Director of Housing Operations