

## **Inquiry into the progress with local government collaboration**

Conwy County Borough Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to this inquiry and our response is detailed below.

### **1. Overview**

1.1 Conwy County Borough Council approved a [statement on Collaboration](#) in 2010 which confirms the authority's commitment to working in partnership. The Statement recognises that Conwy's approach to collaboration must put the service to the citizen at the heart of thinking, and sets out the following principles to drive Conwy's collaborative agenda:

- Consider the outcome for the citizen together with the prime objective of the proposal.
- Give the highest priority to the resulting quality and cost of services to our residents.
- Approach each collaboration idea with an open mind.
- Communicate with our staff, Members and appropriate stakeholders as a project progresses.
- Ensure that future collaboration projects are consistent with the regional vision and can withstand the test of benefit realisation before proceeding.
- Ensure that there is sufficient capacity to deliver a collaboration project.
- Manage risks as they are identified.
- Provide an appropriate exit mechanism.

1.2 The Statement on Collaboration cites that all collaborations Conwy are involved with or leading on;

- Have an exit strategy.
- Are contributing to the Corporate Plan / One Conwy outcomes leading to the delivery of improved performance and outcomes for the citizen.
- Are clear on what they are intending to deliver.
- Are resilient and sustainable.
- Manage resources effectively.
- Are adding value and benefiting Conwy and its citizens
- Have suitable governance structures and are scrutinised appropriately.
- Have a clear performance management system / framework and manage performance well.
- Have a 'Collaboration Agreement / Contract / Service Level Agreement in place that is signed up to by all partners.

1.3 The Wales Programme for Improvement requires Local Authorities to report on the benefits of collaborative initiatives in their Annual Report. Please refer to [www.conwy.gov.uk/accountability](http://www.conwy.gov.uk/accountability) for copies of our annual reports and progress on collaboration.

### **2. The extent to which the Welsh Government's collaboration agenda has been taken forward within local authorities**

2.1 Conwy County Borough Council has contributed to all relevant collaborations detailed within the Welsh Government Compact, and has reviewed their progress through reports to the Senior Management Team/or Corporate Improvement Boards. Projects have included:

- ICT Procurement
- TAIITH Review
- Legal Services
- Housing
- Supporting People
- Purchase 2 Pay
- Library Services
- Emergency Planning
- Regional School Improvement
- Regional Social Care

2.2 As part of ongoing work to support the Statement on Collaboration, information has been collated on the key collaborations that Conwy are leading on and involved with. These key collaborations include:

- Regional Collaboration projects
- Sub Regional Collaboration projects
- Grant funded projects that are managed in collaboration
- Operational collaborations that form part of service delivery

2.3 Further work to support Conwy's Statement on Collaboration has included the collation of all collaboration information into a 'Collaboration Database'. This database holds information on Conwy's key collaborations as well as those that are less well publicised. The database contains details of around 130 collaborations that are in place with Conwy involvement. In terms of type of collaboration, all those included are either integrated, co-ordinations or co-operations.

2.4 Conwy has also completed the final year of a 3 year outcome agreement with Welsh Government which required evidence of collaboration. We have been informally notified that the completion of the outcome agreement has been successful.

### **3. The structural, political and practical barriers to successful collaboration**

3.1 The key barriers include:

- Ensuring that arrangements do not lessen democratic control, without being overly bureaucratic.
- Ensuring that services involved in the collaboration are of sufficient standard.
- Ensuring that there are benefits to all members of the collaboration.

- Implementing change management and excellent communication to all staff and customers involved in the collaboration.
- On a regional arrangement, agreeing on an appropriate accommodation location.
- The challenge of integrating existing IT and overcoming security protocols.
- The capacity of support staff i.e. Human Resources to support the complexity of change.
- The capacity of staff in non-co terminus organisations to be represented on a number of collaboration meetings.

#### **4. The models of governance and accountability adopted when collaboration takes place**

4.1 Organisations in Conwy have a long history of developing collaborations both within and outside the County. Collaborations can bring significant benefits and can respond to complex problems that face communities, which cannot be tackled effectively by any individual organisation working alone. They can provide flexibility, innovation, and additional financial and human resources to help solve problems and deliver shared outcomes.

4.2 Nonetheless, collaborative working is not easy and can carry great risks. Working across organisational and geographic boundaries can bring complexity and ambiguity that can generate confusion and weaken accountability.

4.3 The key to successful collaborative working involves the establishment of good governance, which is defined as the “process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented”. The introduction of clear and consistent Collaboration arrangements can reduce the complexity of working in collaboration.

4.4 Conwy have established the Collaboration Governance Toolkit, which includes guidance, tools and templates that can be used at each stage in the life of a collaboration, from considering the introduction of new collaborations, reviewing existing collaboration arrangements, to exiting collaborations.

4.5 This toolkit has been produced to help organisations working in collaboration in Conwy to ensure that all collaborations they are involved in have good governance arrangements. It provides a basis for examining the key issues requiring consideration, to ensure that any potential problems identified in relation to collaboration working are confronted, assessed, overcome or avoided.

4.6 The collation of information on collaborations in Conwy has led to the development of a ‘Collaboration Matrix’ which allows collaboration leads to define their collaboration by type ranging from very formal collaborations with legally binding agreements to informal meetings with other external partners.

#### **Types of Collaboration**

	<b>Approval</b>	<b>Documentation required</b>	<b>Governance / Management</b>	<b>Legal commitment</b>
<b>Integrated</b>	Council / Cabinet	Business case Service Plan Risk Register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host Authority mix of employment (Secondment Option)*<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Host Authority Single Employer</li> </ul>	Legally binding agreement i.e. contract, partnership agreement,

		Host	(Delegation Option – Joint Committee)* <sup>2</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contract for Services (Commercial Option)*<sup>3</sup></li> <li>A New Organisation (Corporate Option)*<sup>4</sup></li> <li>A mix of employment between Councils (Collaborative Option)*<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	Service Level Agreement, Section 101 Agreement
<b>Co-ordination</b>	Cabinet	Business case Delivery plan Risk Register Lead/s	Management Board / Steering Group	Non-legally binding agreement
<b>Co-operation</b>	Executive approval	Grant application Project/ Programme documentation Defined end date	Project Board Programme Board Strategic Funding Board	Legal agreement with grant/service provider
<b>Network</b>	No approval required	TOR	Attend/coordinate meetings	None

4.7 All of above work has led to the creation of ‘Collaboration Implementation Guidance’ This guidance sets out the steps an Officer in Conwy should follow when leading on the establishment of a collaboration with other public sector organisations and takes into account best practice highlighted in collaboration documentation that Conwy has already produced.

4.8 The review of collaboration in Conwy demonstrated that sound governance structures are in place for around 90% of our collaborations and where there were issues with governance, action plans have been put in place to rectify this. These collaborations have therefore created further management burden due to the need to have Senior Officers involved and the fact that these Officers only have a certain amount of capacity. As new collaborations are developed, governance arrangements will have to be carefully considered in order to ensure that Senior Officers from the organisations have the capacity to be involved.

4.9 The Wales Audit Office is also following up on work undertaken in terms of collaboration and is particularly interested in whether the authority’s collaboration arrangements are working effectively to deliver improved performance and outcomes.

## 5. The overall costs benefits of collaborating to deliver local government services

5.1 Included within Conwy’s collaboration database are the objectives of each collaboration and its anticipated / realised benefits particularly in terms of outcomes for users.

5.2 Conwy have undertaken a collaboration benefits realisation review of all 130+ collaborations to ensure that they are aligned with all the principles as set out in the Statement on Collaboration. This review also helped to ensure that each collaboration is delivering on its original objectives and making a difference in terms of service delivery to users. The review also took account of any ‘disbenefits’ associated with each collaboration and in the instances where the disbenefits were considered to be outweighing the benefits, these collaborations were further scrutinised and disbanded as necessary.

5.3 Certain collaborative working initiatives have led to improved performance in terms of PI's and service delivery and the review has highlighted this. The main reason for this is that these collaborations are based upon a sound and approved business case from their outset.

5.4 The review of collaboration in Conwy has shown that 75% of collaborative working initiatives have achieved their anticipated benefits in terms of resource savings and improved performance. This is because they were based upon sound business cases which demonstrated how the benefits would and could be realised. An example of this is Galw Gofal, which is a jointly run call monitoring service with other North Wales LA's. Cashable savings of around £300k have been made since the joint service's inception in 2011 and feedback from Service users has shown improved customer satisfaction compared to when it was solely run by Conwy.

5.5 In order to manage the efficiency and impact of partnership and cross-sector working, Conwy are ensuring that the review of all collaborations occurs on annual basis i.e. checking that collaborations are still aligned with the principles and ensuring they are delivering the benefits to users as originally anticipated and the collaboration database is kept up to date. Reports have been presented to Scrutiny regarding the collaboration review and further scrutiny has been targeted at those collaborations where there are perceived issues.

5.6 This process has given us the confidence to cease collaboration were it is evident that the benefits are not being realised/are no longer viable. We have therefore disbanded the Mental Health Partnership with Betsi Cadwalader University Health Board and Denbighshire County Council, the North Wales Procurement Partnership, the Conwy and Denbighshire Highways Collaboration and halted preparatory work within Regulatory Services.

I hope you find our comments of value in your considerations.

Yours sincerely

Tim Pritchard  
Acting Corporate Modernisation Manager