

Annex E: Governance Assurance Statement

The LEP Chair and Chief Executive should here provide a brief formal assurance statement on the status of governance and transparency. In particular, they should focus on any issues raised in Annex A. This statement should also be published on the LEP's website following conclusion of the Annual Performance Review process (in April 2018). You should cover any overview and scrutiny function undertaken by the Accountable Body. **(max 500 words)**

Following the publication of the Ney review and Best Practice Guidance we reviewed all of the components of our assurance framework to ensure that they met the requirements of these publications. This involved extensive discussions with our Area Lead, the LEP Team, S151, and Board members. We are grateful for the significant amount of effort involved in a short period and can confirm that the constitutional and procedural elements were put in place in accordance with the required deadlines.

Our LEP Executive Board continues to meet bi-monthly (8 times since the last Annual Conversation), as has our Partnership (2 times), in fulfilling their role and responsibilities and in accordance with our constitutional arrangements. Board reports are placed promptly on our website at <https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/resources/> The Board has only utilised its electronic decisions process on two occasions during the course of the year, where essential in the interests of expedience. This ran smoothly in accordance with procedure set out in our constitution and decisions published: <https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/app/uploads/2018/10/180720-Electronic-Decisions-From-July-Executive-Board-Meeting.pdf>

The board has continued to mature and develop, with Board Members becoming increasingly engaged in taking on specific roles, e.g. SME business champion, and in chairing and leading LEP sub-groups. The board currently has 4 vacancies and recruitment is planned following receipt of the revised National Assurance Framework. In April 2018, the LEP published its Annual Audit Report which can be found on our website at: <https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/app/uploads/2018/05/LEP-Governance-Review-Audit-Report-2018.pdf>. The work of the LEP and board decisions are published on our website, in newsletters, social media and are subject to ongoing scrutiny through our partner meetings and forums e.g. a widely-publicised Annual Conference and our Annual Scrutiny Meeting.

During the year, the LEP moved to a single accountable body position, simplifying and improving transparency. The LEP Partnership Manager is retiring in December 2018. The board plans review the secretariat structure and appoint a CEO in the new year, following receipt of the revised National Assurance Framework. As with the recruitment to vacant board member posts, it is considered that recruitment and restructuring must be undertaken in full knowledge of the revised Framework and outcome of the geographies submission. This will ensure the new operating structures are fully compliant and governance and transparency are further strengthened.

Our revised constitution was approved in April and is published on our website at <https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/about-us/governance/> . This page explains the framework and provides links to the various elements in an easily understood format.

Subsequently we have amended the email address for confidential complaint reporting to ensure impartiality.

The team and partners were briefed on the new arrangements and requirements which they are required to comply with.

The code of conduct can be found at - <https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/app/uploads/2018/02/Code-of-Conduct-for-LEP-Board-Members-February-2018.pdf>

The agenda and papers are published on line at - <https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/resources/>

Registers of interest are published at <https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/about-us/governance/> this includes all key staff responsible for advising the board. These are reviewed twice per annum with members advising of changes in the intervening period.

The complaints policy can be found at - https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/app/uploads/2018/11/181018-Enquiries-and-Complaints-Policy-v2_approved.pdf

The whistleblowing policy can be found at - https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/app/uploads/2018/11/181018-Whistleblowing-policy-v2_approved.pdf

We are monitoring the operation of the framework and working with all partners to ensure that compliance is ensured. This includes an annual audit commissioned by the S151.

Signed:
Name: David Frost CBE
Position: Chair
Date: 7/12/18

Signed:
Name: Peter Davenport
Position: Partnership Manager
Date:7/12/18