

Annex C: Governance Assurance Statement

The LEP Chair and Chief Executive should here provide a brief formal assurance statement on the status of governance and transparency. This should include any overview and scrutiny function undertaken by the Accountable Body. This should be sent to localgrowthassurance@communities.gov.uk copying the Cities and Local Growth Unit Area Lead by **16 December 2019**. This statement should also be published on the LEP's website by **28 February 2020** and confirmation sent to localgrowthassurance@communities.gov.uk (**max 500 words**)

Following the publication of the National Local Growth Assurance Framework in January 2019, SSLEP reviewed all parts of our assurance framework to ensure that it meets the new requirements. This involved extensive discussions with our Area Lead, the LEP Team, S151, and Board members. We 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 monthly and 8 times/year, with two annual open meetings, one of which is the Annual General Meeting, aligned to the Conference. Board agendas, reports and minutes are placed promptly on our website at <https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/resources/> and a new publication policy, adopted this year, has maximised the number of papers that can be published.

Under the former Chair, a number of private sector board seats were left vacant while awaiting the geographies outcome. Notwithstanding this, the Board has operated to its new articles of association since 1 April 2019, while undertaking the Board restructure and awaiting local government election outcomes which delayed some nominations. The Board has therefore been required to use its electronic decisions process several times since April, where essential in the interests of expedience. This ran smoothly in accordance with procedure set out in our Assurance Framework and decisions were published.

A Scheme of Delegation has been put in place this year in the interest of improving the efficiency of decision-making and increasing Board Director time that is dedicated to strategic planning. This has operated efficiently.

Under the Interim Chair, all private and public sector Board seats are now occupied, with District Council partner representation having doubled, all Districts/Boroughs now involved in the Board as Directors or Alternates and four new enthusiastic, strategic thinkers brought on to occupy vacant private sector places. Board Directors are all taking on a leading role in a key area, with new posts for new Directors being confirmed at the 19 December 2019 meeting. The Interim Chair has used the LEP Review and LIS development process to relaunch the LEP, re-examining and agreeing priorities to drive productivity growth and improve workforce skills across our geography.

SSLEP website provides the following detail for the public:

- Agenda, papers and minutes of the SSLEP's decision-making groups. This year, SSLEP reviewed its report publication policy, increasing the amount of papers now published to increase transparency.
- Partnership's strategies and policies, Annual Report and Accounts (also available in print form), Delivery Plans, project business cases and progress reports. Each year a series of independent audits are undertaken which are published together with any recommendations.

Board Directors engage directly with business through networks, events and Growth Hub sessions and supporting programmes and an SSLEP Annual Conference open to all.

SSLEP provides updates to Local Authorities at operational and Leader/Chief Executive bi-monthly meetings. Independent scrutiny by Local Authorities has been delegated to a Joint Scrutiny Committee which meets at least annually, holding SSLEP to account on strategy and delivery. All local authorities are invited to attend. Details of the meetings are publicised on Council websites in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000 and on SSLEP website. Last meeting was 8 January 2019:

Our latest **revised Assurance Framework v6** was approved in September 2019 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.

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 on page 110 of the Assurance Framework.

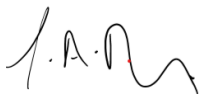
The **Complaints Policy** can be found on page 116 of the Assurance Framework.

The **Whistleblowing policy** can be found on page 122 of the Assurance Framework.

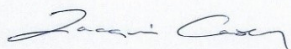
The **Agenda and Papers** are published on line at - <https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/resources/>

Declarations of Interest are published at <https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/aboutus/governance/> This includes Directors and key staff responsible for advising the board. These are reviewed twice per annum as a minimum, with members advising of changes in the intervening period.

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: Alun Rogers
Position: SSLEP Chair
Date: 16 December 2019



Signed:
Name: Jacqui Casey
Position: Interim Partnership Manager
Date: 16 December 2019