

Annex B: Section 151/73 Assurance Statement

The Section 151/73 Officer should here provide a report to the Annual Performance Review on their work for the LEP over the last twelve months and their opinion with a specific requirement to identify any issues of concern on governance and transparency. In particular, you should focus on any particular issues raised in Annex A Annual Performance Review Preparation. This should be sent to localgrowthassurance@communities.gov.uk copying the Cities and Local Growth Unit Area Lead by **16 December 2019. (max 500 words)**

As part of Cheshire East Council's Accountable Body role for the LEP, we continue to carry out a variety of roles and responsibilities, including (but not limited to): holding and administering various funds on the LEP's behalf; making payments directly to fund projects; establishing clear financial management arrangements; preparing returns for BEIS on use of funding; allocating interest on fund balances; producing reports to LEP's Committees and providing an internal audit function.

During the year, alongside Finance, Legal and Internal Audit, the Council's Growth & Economic Development Service has begun to undertake a key role, acting as contact point for the LEP and commissioning support services from within the Council to meet our Accountable Body responsibilities, particularly as regards the legal administration of project transactions in accordance with the Assurance Framework.

Internal Audit has conducted three reviews during 2019 in line with the annual audit plan agreed with the LEP's senior management and presented to the Finance & Audit Committee.

Firstly, a review of the Local Assurance and Accountability Framework to support the February 2019 s151 Officer compliance letter was undertaken. This was to provide assurance that the Local Framework met the requirements of the National Framework of November 2016 plus other subsequent additional guidance. It also took into account any actions that might be necessary to meet the requirements of the revised National Framework issued in January 2019 effective from 1 April 2019. A very small number of recommendations were made and agreed management actions have been completed or are in progress.

Secondly, the 2018-19 Growth Hub Grant certification was successfully completed in May 2019 without any issues being raised.

Finally there was a gateway review undertaken of the project bringing the Growth Hub services "in house". A very small number of recommendations were made and agreed management actions are in progress or have not yet reached the implementation dates.

Further work will be undertaken in 2020 to support the February 2020 Assurance & Accountability Framework s151 Officer compliance letter.

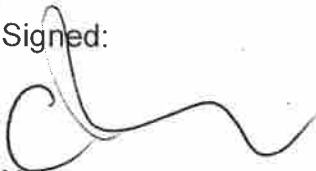
I receive all LEP Board and Strategy Committee papers and have attended Board on 3 occasions this year. I have sight of all developments/proposed changes ahead of any key decisions. I am a member of both the LEP's Performance and Investment Committee and its Finance and Audit Committee and I, or my representative, attend all meetings. I therefore have the opportunity to comment on all major funding decisions.

In May 2019, the LEP appointed a new post, Finance and Commercial Director. My Deputy s151 Officer and I have regular bi-monthly meetings with the Director, providing valuable additional assurance.

The LEP's Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues its function to increase transparency of decisions made by the LEP and to give further assurance by providing an independent committee that is able to explore and interrogate the rationale for decisions made.

In summary, I am satisfied with the LEP's governance and transparency and am happy to report that I have no issues of concern.

Signed:



Name: Alex Thompson

Position: Director of Finance and Customer Services (s151 Officer)

Date: 16/12/2019