

SOUTH EAST LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

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1. Overview

- 1.1. The South East Local Enterprise Partnership is one of 39 LEPs established to “provide the clear vision and strategic leadership to drive sustainable private sector-led growth and job creation in their area” [Local Growth: Realising every place’s potential, HMG, October 2010]. It encompasses the local authority areas of East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock.
- 1.2. The **SELEP Assurance Framework** sets out how local growth schemes funded through the LEP will be selected and delivered to ensure maximum impact and best value for money. It achieves this by applying the federal model of operation of SELEP to support local management and the proven track records of member councils for transport, economic development and wider programme delivery.
- 1.3. The **SELEP Strategic Board** sets the strategic direction of the LEP, providing clear strategic leadership and championing shared SELEP priorities. It is the main SELEP interface with Government, bringing together both private and public sectors to drive local growth and job creation and to oversee all SELEP activity to deliver this aim.
- 1.4. Formal democratic decision-making is through the **SELEP Accountability Board** which approves all major funding decisions and monitors and manages SELEP’s capital programme for greatest impact, informed by local area management information. The Joint Committee structure of the Accountability Board roots decision-making firmly in the democratic process and enables it to be subject to democratic scrutiny.
- 1.5. **Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships** manage funding devolved by the Accountability Board, taking all local decisions on this investment within defined thresholds (based on the quantum and percentage of local investment programme). Local Area Partnerships/Boards may either be established as Joint Committees in their own right or operate by advising their responsible County/Unitary authority (S151) Finance Director.
- 1.6. Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships are responsible for local delivery and managing their local programme within these local tolerance levels for both spending and delivery as agreed by the SELEP Accountability Board. They will submit quarterly reports to the SELEP Accountability Board for formal approval as part of SELEP’s reporting process to Government.
- 1.7. An **Independent Technical Evaluator** will work with scheme sponsors to assess and support business case and project development, advising on project readiness and delivery and overall programme management. The Independent Technical Evaluator will make recommendations on the release of funding to the SELEP Accountability Board.
- 1.8. As **Accountable Body**, Essex County Council, retains overall legal accountability for the SELEP investment programme, supported by Essex’s Chief Finance Officer, the S151 officer.
- 1.9. Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships, local councils and project sponsors will adhere to the SELEP Assurance Framework as a requirement for funding and to ensure consistency of prioritisation, programme management and investment, cost control and approval and programme/risk management.
- 1.10. Our SELEP Assurance Framework draws heavily on both the SELEP Local Transport Board Assurance Framework agreed with Government in 2012 and the SELEP Terms of Reference agreed by the SELEP Board in December 2014 and published on the SELEP website.
- 1.11. The SELEP Assurance Framework will be agreed annually **by the SELEP Strategic Board**.

2. Governance and Decision Taking

2.1. SELEP Strategic Board

2.1.1. The SELEP Strategic Board remains the primary private/public partnership board within the SELEP structure. It is responsible for setting the LEP's strategic direction and providing clear strategic leadership.

2.1.2. Working collectively, Board members are responsible for:

- Setting the strategic direction and priorities of the LEP;
- Satisfying themselves that the SELEP business plan is in accordance with the strategic direction and that the milestones are sufficiently ambitious;
- Considering and agreeing a position on major items of strategic importance;
- Monitoring performance of the operations and activities of the LEP;
- Ensuring that funds delegated or assigned to the LEP for investment, where the Board has determined a method of allocation, are being implemented to best effect on behalf of government; and
- Deciding how the activities of the LEP should be delegated.

2.1.3. In particular, the SELEP Strategic Board will take a leading role in:

- Providing strategic leadership in agreeing SELEP's overarching strategic vision and priorities (ie Strategic Economic Plan);
- Championing the SELEP area as a whole where appropriate for growth and jobs; and
- Supporting pan-LEP activity on SEFUND, Rural and Coastal regeneration, U9 Universities activity, Centre for Offshore Renewable Engineering (CORE), priority sectors as appropriate (eg Creative) and the Growth Deal.

2.1.4. The SELEP Strategic Board is constituted as follows:

The Chair of the LEP Board (in addition to the representatives below);
5 business representatives from Essex, Southend & Thurrock;
4 business representatives from Kent and Medway;
3 business representatives from East Sussex;
5 local government representatives from Essex, Southend & Thurrock, of which 3 must be from the local authorities that formed the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership;
4 local government representatives from Kent and Medway;
3 local government representatives from East Sussex;
1 representative of the higher education sector;
1 representative of the further education and skills sector.

2.1.5. Members are selected by their local private/public sector partnerships or their representative bodies.

2.1.6. The diagram in Appendix A summarises the relationship between the Strategic Board and the group structure of the SELEP.

2.2. SELEP Accountability Board

2.2.1. The SELEP Accountability Board is the main performance management structure within the LEP. Working through local area accountability arrangements, the SELEP Accountability Board provides the accountability structure for decision-making and approval of funding within the overarching vision of the Board. By doing so, SELEP satisfies the accountability processes for the Accountable Body and the national LEP Assurance Framework.

2.2.2. Within the Partnership's Growth Deal and Strategic Economic Plan and such other plans as may be approved by the Strategic Board, the Accountability Board will be responsible for the implementation of the Partnership's Accountability and Assurance Framework and will agree all processes by which bids are assessed, risks considered, approvals made and performance managed. As agreed by the SELEP Strategic Board, this will include:

- Appraisals and approvals (eg of business cases and investment) in accordance with Independent Technical Evaluator recommendations;
- Monitoring project assessment/implementation and delivery;
- Ensuring accountability from each of the federated areas relating to expenditure and programme delivery (through their responsible S151 officer);
- Approving variations to schemes;
- Quarterly performance reporting on an exceptions (to tolerance levels) basis to the Strategic Board;
- Reporting on progress to central government; and
- Any other accountability or assurance function required by central government or recommended by the Partnership's auditors or the Chief Finance Officer of the Partnership's Accountable Body.

2.2.3. The Accountability Board will be advised by the Accountable Body's chief finance officer and Monitoring Officer.

2.2.4. The SELEP Accountability Board is constituted of 9 members appointed as follows:

Voting Members

- 1 member appointed by each of the 6 member councils (6)

Non-voting Co-opted members

- A Vice Chairman of the SELEP Strategic Board appointed by the Strategic Board (1)
- One member appointed by the Accountability Board on the nomination of the higher education sector (1)
- One member appointed by the Accountability Board on the nomination of the further education sector (1)

2.2.5. Any funding which may be allocated for pan-LEP projects may be managed through the SELEP Secretariat, SEFUND (once established) or alternative arrangements in agreement with the SELEP Board and will also report regularly to the SELEP Accountability Board.

3. Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships and SELEP Sub Groups

3.1. SELEP is a clear partnership between business and public sector at SELEP and at local partnership levels. At the heart of this partnership is the devolution of local accountability and funding to ensure decision-making at the most local level appropriate.

3.2. Local Management and Accountability Arrangements

3.2.1. In such a large LEP area, local management of schemes and project spending is not only desirable but is imperative if full value and impact is to be obtained.

3.2.2. As such, local accountability arrangements are established in each local area through existing private/public partnerships to oversee local programme management supported by their nominated section 151 officer. The form and structure of these arrangements will be a matter for local determination.

3.2.3. The SELEP Accountability Board, through Essex County Council as Accountable Body, will enter into a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with each local area through the county/unitary S151 officer(s) supporting it. The SLA will include financial responsibilities, monitoring requirements, terms of operation and scheme communications.

3.2.4. Nominated S151 officers provide regular quarterly monitoring reports to an agreed format to the SELEP Accountability Board as agreed within its SLA.

3.3. Devolution of Funding

3.3.1. By agreement of the SELEP Accountability Board, the SELEP Accountable Body will pass funding directly to the relevant county/unitary local authority or other legal entity which will assume legal responsibility for delivery. The Section 151 officer of this local body will carry out the normal stewardship role in terms of monitoring and accounting. They will be responsible for providing regular reports to the Accountable body and the SELEP secretariat to enable quarterly reporting to the main Accountability Board as specified in the SLA.

3.3.2. Financial “tolerance levels” for local programme management are set for local areas expressed as an absolute or as a percentage of the local programme. It is anticipated most financial variances would be absorbed or retained locally with space for local prioritisation in programme management within these agreed tolerance levels.

3.3.3. For all devolved funding, Essex County Council as Accountable Body will issue an SLA with the following minimum requirements in relation to grant allocations to each county and unitary council to:

- Provide grant funding to the relevant council for all schemes within its area approved by the Accountability Board following technical appraisal;
- Devolve responsibility for all relevant requirements, including clawback provisions if applicable, as may be specified or intended by the grant awarding body;
- Any monitoring or reporting requirements that may assist decision making and prioritisation by the Accountability Board or the Strategic Board;
- Commit the Accountable Body to making payment to the council within a maximum number of days following receipt of the grant from the Government, for the purpose of delivering the schemes for which the grant has been allocated, provided that the following conditions are met:
 - The business cases for which the funding has been allocated, have been ratified by the SELEP Strategic Board for payments in April 2015; for all subsequent payments, the business cases must have been approved by the Accountability Board.

- A copy of the SLA signed by the respective Council's section 151 officer has been sent to the Accountable Body's section 151 officer.
- The Accountable Body is in receipt of the grant from the Government.
- Commit the Council to be responsible for any project overspend;
- Enable the Council to retain the proceeds of project underspends for use on other local growth fund schemes or to offset overspend, provided that this is within the tolerance levels of up to 10% variance on any individual local growth fund project and has been approved by the Government, where this is required. As part of the on-going reporting process, the Accountability board will be informed of such amendments to support its check and challenge role;
- Enable the Council to request approval from the Accountability Board (and if necessary, the Government) for underspends that are in excess of 10% variance on any individual project to be reallocated to a new or another Local Growth Deal project. In requesting approval for re-allocating underspends, the impact on outputs and outcomes for all projects affected by the re-alignment of funding must be reported to the Accountability Board and the replacement scheme must be the next agreed local priority;
- Enabling Council's to mitigate any underspends of LGF in a particular financial year that can't be re-profiled within the Council's existing approved schemes, through the following mechanisms:
 - *To transfer the Grant to another SELEP partner authority providing the following conditions are met:*
 - approvals for any transfer of Grant to another SELEP Partner Authority must be secured from the Accountability Board regardless of value;
 - transfers can only take place with another SELEP Partner Authority with a current, signed, Local Growth Fund SLA in place with the Accountable Body;
 - transfers can only be made to named projects which have been approved by the Accountability Board and are not subject to any additional requirements; and
 - any transfer of funding must not adversely affect the outputs and outcomes of any Growth Deal projects.

or

- *Where slippage cannot be transferred to another LGF project and there is no opportunity to transfer it to a SELEP Partner Authority, the LGF funding can be used to fund non-LGF capital programme projects of the Council providing the following conditions are met:*
 - the Council is required to recycle its deferred funding back to the LGF pot in the subsequent financial year, such that total Grant allocation remains unchanged (over the programme);
 - approvals for any virement between LGF and non LGF projects must be secured from the Accountability Board regardless of value;
 - demonstration, to the satisfaction of the SELEP and Accountable Body, that LGF has been applied to capital expenditure within the relevant financial year;
 - identification of the equivalent unrestricted local capital financing sources that have been displaced by the Grant in the relevant financial year, and demonstrates to the SELEP and Accountable Body that these funding sources are subsequently applied in the subsequent financial year against the SELEP Growth Deal projects;
 - demonstration to the SELEP and Accountable Body that the full amount of allocated Grant for the approved Local Growth Deal project(s) has been properly applied to the approved project(s) over the agreed project delivery profile; and
 - any change to funding must not adversely affect the outputs and outcomes of projects.

- Require the Council to return to the Accountable Body any unspent grant where re-allocation to other projects has not been approved. In such instances, the Accountable Body will require the Accountability Board to agree how the funding will be utilized; The Accountable Body is not permitted to utilize the funding for its own purposes without the permission of the Accountability Board.

3.3.4. The Accountable Body **will continue to monitor the process for managing underspends as set out in 3.3.3**, in conjunction with the Accountability Board to ensure that the arrangements are operating effectively.

3.3.5. All devolution of funding will be made in accordance with Government grant conditions.

3.4. Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships

3.4.1. Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships are the local private/private partnerships for East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock. The form and structure of Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships is for local determination.

3.4.2. Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships present their local priorities to the SELEP Board in the Growth Deal and Strategic Economic Plan (or as appropriate in response to other funding opportunities), agreeing a prioritised list of growth schemes that will deliver on SELEP objectives.

3.4.3. Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships engage local business and utilise public and private sector knowledge and expertise to ensure prioritisation and delivery to provide greatest benefit to the SELEP area in terms of achieving economic growth through the delivery of development, infrastructure and regeneration projects. They are responsible for prioritising, monitoring delivery and management of the SELEP programme within local tolerance levels for spending and delivery agreed by the SELEP Accountability Board.

3.4.4. Local areas shall determine their own processes for the selection and term of office of their Local Area Delivery Board/Partnership representatives.

3.5. Independent Technical Evaluator

3.5.1. To support local project development and SELEP Business case approval, an Independent Technical Evaluator is appointed by SELEP.

3.5.2. An Independent Technical Evaluator is put place to:

- Provide technical advice to the SELEP Strategic Board and SELEP Accountability Board and local project sponsors on the basis of which funding should be released;
- Support project sponsors in ongoing management and prioritisation of local programmes and projects where required;
- Support project sponsors in applying a consistent and proportionate project appraisal methodology in scheme prioritisation;
- Support project sponsors in complying with the agreed proportionate business case development process;

- Support project sponsors in assessing each project business case in relation to compliance with process, and delivery of desired outcomes including value for money and cost benefit;
- Make recommendations to SELEP Board and Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships on projects that perform well against assessment process (eg on agreed weightings) and where projects may be reconsidered due to poor or delayed performance; and
- Support local partners in the prioritisation of submissions for further rounds of Local Growth Fund bids.

3.6. **Accountable Body**

3.6.1. By agreement of the SELEP Strategic Board Essex County Council is the Accountable Body for SELEP and through its S151 Chief Finance Officer or their representative will support the SELEP.

3.6.2. In this role, the Accountable Body has responsibility to:

- Support SELEP in accounting to Government on programme delivery and financial management;
- Make payments for local programme management and delivery as appropriate;
- Through Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships, keep full accounts and provide financial statements, in consultation with local county/unitary authorities;
- Account for all spend allocated to the SELEP;
- With the responsible local S151 officer, ensure that the decisions and activities of the SELEP conform to legal requirements with regard to equalities, environment, EU issues etc;
- Take responsibility for the decisions of the SELEP in approving schemes or programmes (for example if subjected to legal challenge);
- Ensure appropriate response to FOI requests with regard to the responsibilities of the Accountable body;
- Ensure the appropriate use of Government funds ;
- Set up and manage necessary legal agreements such as:
 - SLA's between the LEP and Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships and individual county/unitary authorities
 - Grant agreements and conditions
- The Accountable Body shall also be responsible for ensuring that the SELEP adheres to the agreed Assurance Framework and meets all appropriate procedural, financial and legal requirements; these are set out further in section 5.9 below.

3.7. **SELEP Group Structure**

3.7.1. With a devolved structure, there is no requirement for additional assurance sub groups. Local performance management rightly takes place at local level. Equally, it is vital that additional layers are not placed between the SELEP Accountability Board and local accountability arrangements.

3.7.2. Within the structure, therefore, only a limited number of working and advisory groups are recognised. All clearly link to the agreed SELEP Terms of Reference for the SELEP Strategic Board or to specific Board decisions.

3.7.3. The groups range from agreed sub-committees to informal groupings supporting a lead Board Member. All report to the SELEP Strategic Board.

3.7.4. As agreed by the SELEP Board in December 2014, there are four types of group as set-out below:

3.7.5. Sub-Committees

3.7.5.1. These are formal sub-committees of the SELEP Strategic Board with a remit from the Board to undertake clear functions on behalf of the LEP as a whole.

3.7.5.2. Currently there are

- 3.7.5.2.1. The European Structural Investment Framework (ESIF); and
- 3.7.5.2.2. The SEFUND Working Group.

3.7.6. Spatial Groups

3.7.6.1. These are working groups recognised by the LEP representing clear geographical areas of interests.

3.7.6.2. Currently there are

- 3.7.6.2.1. the Coastal Communities Group;
- 3.7.6.2.2. the Rural Group; and
- 3.7.6.2.3. the Thames Gateway Strategic Group (of which SELEP is a member)

3.7.7. Sector Groups

1.1.1.1. These are specific sector representational groups, linked to an industry sector or group identified as a priority in the Strategic Economic Plan.

1.1.1.2. Currently there are

- 1.1.1.2.1. the U8 (universities); and
- 1.1.1.2.2. the Creative & Cultural group.

3.7.8. Working Groups

3.7.8.1. These are specific, non-decision-making advisory groups to the SELEP Strategic Board and SELEP Accountability Board providing specialist knowledge or technical expertise in shaping strategy or delivering agreed pan-LEP priorities.

3.7.8.2. Currently there are

- 3.7.8.2.1. The Senior Officer Group (SOG)
- 3.7.8.2.2. The Centre for Offshore Renewable Engineering (CORE) group;
- 3.7.8.2.3. Skills Advisory Group;
- 3.7.8.2.4. Housing Group;
- 3.7.8.2.5. Growth Hub Working Group; and
- 3.7.8.2.6. A reinstated Transport Officers Group

Working groups will range from a formal advisory group to an informal, ad hoc support mechanism for a lead Board member.

3.7.9. Terms of reference and membership of all groups are detailed in Appendix B.

4. Transparent decision making

- 4.1. Clear arrangements have been put in place to support effective and meaningful engagement of local partners and the public. The SELEP Strategic and Accountability Boards operate on the basis of transparency, openness and good communications, and has processes in place to ensure that these principles are replicated as part of the decision making processes. SELEP has implemented the following in support of this approach:
- 4.1.1. Meetings of the Board are open to the press and public as observers, with the exception of any items that should be treated confidentially for commercial or other reasons. Filming or recording of proceedings can take place provided that they are agreed in advance with the Secretariat.
 - 4.1.2. Final papers for Board discussion shall be made available on the LEP website (see below) as soon as they are disseminated to the Board, except for papers which are not suitable for release into the public domain as they would be exempt from publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.
 - 4.1.3. Minutes shall be made publicly available on the LEP website no more than five working days following approval by the Board, except for minutes which are not suitable for release into the public domain for example due to them containing personal information about individuals or commercially sensitive data. Any minutes which are not released into the public domain will be stored confidentially by the secretariat.
- 4.2. Through the Chairman, the Strategic Board shall be responsible for the LEP's communications strategy. This shall include communications to Strategic Board members, participating organisations and the wider public and shall include the maintenance of an up-to-date, relevant and accessible website. The Secretariat shall be responsible for implementation of the communications strategy.
- 4.3. SELEP Website**
- 4.3.1. A dedicated website for the SELEP is available for local partners and the public to keep in touch with progress on implementing the Growth Deal, access key documents, including agendas, minutes and decisions of the SELEP boards.
 - 4.3.2. The website can be accessed at <http://www.southeastlep.com/>
- 4.4. Arrangements for making and recording decisions**
- 4.4.1. The arrangements for making and recording decisions and for ensuring that papers, decisions, minutes, agendas etc are published are set out in the SELEP Terms of Reference , a copy of which can be accessed on the website at [SELEP Governance and Terms of Reference](#).
- 4.5. Information requests and complaints**
- 4.5.1. Contact arrangements for all freedom of information and environmental information requests are made available on the SELEP website; The Accountable Body will ensure that all such requests are dealt with in line with the relevant legislation **and this approach is set out in the Accountability Board's Joint**

Committee Agreement.

4.5.2. The LEP will deal with any complaints in line with a complaints policy that will be published on the SELEP website.

4.6. Conflicts of Interest

4.6.1. The conflicts of interest policy is published as part of the SELEP Terms of Reference, a copy of which can be accessed on the website at [SELEP Governance and Terms of Reference](#).

4.6.2. A register of declared interests is maintained and published on the SELEP website.

4.7. Local Engagement

4.7.1. Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships are the primary forum for engagement with local businesses and councils. Local Boards/Partnerships engage local business and utilise public and private sector knowledge and expertise to develop projects and ensure prioritisation and delivery to provide greatest benefit to the SELEP area.

4.7.2. In addition, the LEP Secretariat will support the SELEP Strategic Board in wider engagement on pan-LEP and national priorities as necessary. The SELEP will undertake an Annual Review and host an open Annual Meeting in July each year. The SELEP website will be regularly updated.

4.8. Involving delivery partners in decision making

4.8.1. With the exception of any pan-LEP projects or those for which national or alternative decision-making is prescribed, Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships are responsible for prioritising, monitoring delivery and management of their local SELEP programme within local tolerance levels for spending and delivery agreed by the SELEP Accountability Board.

4.8.2. Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships select their representatives on the SELEP Strategic Board and will be involved in all decision-making.

4.9. Maximising Social Value

4.9.1. SELEP and local partners will at all times consider how added economic, social or environmental benefits can be maximised and secured and through our commissioning, procurement and delivery. All partners in the SELEP support the principles of the Social Value Act 2012.

The SELEP will endeavour to ensure a level playing field for small businesses and voluntary, charity and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations in bidding for SELEP or local delivery contracts as appropriate in the delivery of SELEP objectives.

5. Accountable Decision Making

- 5.1. Grants, such as the Local Growth Fund, allocated to the SELEP from Central Government will be paid via a Section 31 grant determination to the Accountable body. The Accountable body will be responsible for the proper use and administration of the funding, in line with any requirements set out in the grant funding letter / agreement. The Accountable body is not able to use this funding for its own purpose without a clear mandate from the SELEP Accountability Board.
- 5.2. The Accountable body, (through its Responsible Financial Officer - the Section 151 Officer), is responsible for ensuring that grant income received, payments out and any applicable repayments are accounted for and administered correctly (which will fall under the Council's normal audit arrangements). The Accountable body is also responsible for ensuring that all decisions are made in accordance with any requirements stipulated by the grant awarding body. The Accountable Body will ensure that this requirement is met by transferring grant to partner bodies under a service level agreement which reflects the grant requirements of the awarding body.
- 5.3. The SELEP has a vital leadership role to play; it is responsible for developing and maintaining the Strategic Economic Plan and determining the key funding priorities to which Local Growth Fund and other resources should be directed, and ensuring that there is adequate capacity to deliver against those.
- 5.4. Democratic accountability for the decisions made by the SELEP are provided through local authority leader representation, with accountability to the business community flowing through the business leaders.
- 5.5. The complementary roles of both parties – the financial responsibilities of the lead section 151 officer and the leadership role and accountabilities of the SELEP – will be supported by a set of agreed systems and practices and managed through the Accountability Board. These practices/ systems are set out in the terms of reference of the Accountability Board and a Joint Committee Agreement, will support both the Section 151 officer role in ensuring proper, transparent decisions which deliver value for money but also support timely, informed decision making by the SELEP.
- 5.6. **The circumstances under which the Accountable body would not comply with a SELEP Accountability Board decision are:**
 - The decision does not comply with the Financial Regulations of the Accountable body
 - The decision would be contra to any requirements laid out in all agreements, including the SLA and the Joint Committee Agreement, for which the accountable body is responsible
 - The decision is unlawful
 - The decision does not comply with the requirements of this Assurance Framework
- 5.7. **The process for resolving any conflict in decision between the Accountable Body and the SELEP Accountability Board is as follows:**
 - 5.7.1. **Where there is conflict of decision between the Accountable Body and the Accountability Board, the following process should be followed:**
 - i) **In the first instance, any dispute would be escalated to the Chairman of the Strategic Board and the Section 151 Officer of the Accountable Body within 10 working days of the dispute arising. The Chairman of the Strategic Board and the Section 151 Officer to agree to discuss and, in good faith, attempt to resolve any such dispute and try and reach agreement on the action required to resolve the**

decision.

ii) In the event that the Chairman of the Strategic Board and the Section 151 officer of the Accountable Body are unable to resolve the dispute, the matter will be referred to the Government (or grant awarding body of not the Government) for consideration.

iii) The Accountability Board will be informed of the outcome of the discussions to resolve the conflict.

5.8. Scrutiny arrangements for the LEP

5.8.1. The SELEP is a multi-authority partnership which presents the challenge of different scrutiny arrangements in place in each of the respective local authorities; the over-arching scrutiny arrangements put in place for the LEP need to take this into account.

5.8.2. The details of the scrutiny arrangements are set out in the Joint Committee Agreement, signed up to by each authority with representatives on the Accountability Board. They give each authority the ability to challenge a decision made by the Accountability Board providing checks and balances to the operation of the LEP.

5.8.3. The arrangements will ensure that scrutiny is managed in a way that gives equal footing for all partners in the SELEP.

5.9. This Assurance Framework confirms that:

- Essex County Council will be the accountable body for the Single Local Growth Fund and other funding sources received from Government
- use of resources will be managed in accordance with the Accountable body's established processes including financial regulations and contract regulations
- annual accounts for the SELEP will be published
- The Accountable Body's responsibilities with regard to the SELEP assurance framework are:
 - ensuring decisions and activities of SELEP conform with legal requirements with regard to equalities, social value, environment, State Aid, procurement etc.
 - ensuring that the funds are used appropriately, and in a manner that is consistent with the contents of the offer letter from government, where appropriate.
 - ensuring that the SELEP Assurance Framework is adhered to.
 - maintaining the official record of SELEP proceedings and holding copies of all relevant LEP documents relating to LGF and other funding allocated to the LEP.
 - ensuring that there are arrangements in place for local audit of funding allocated by LEPs at least equivalent to those in place for local authority spend.
 - SELEP and the Accountable Body have agreed timescales and operating practices to support the effective implementation of decisions. These are reflected in the Service Level Agreements between the Accountable Body and the delivery agent and include:

- ensuring arrangements are in place for monitoring delivery
- ensuring that there are clear expectations in relation to the information required from scheme partners and delivery agents;
- ensuring that when the SELEP awards funding for a project, that there are written agreements in place between the Accountable Body and the delivery agent, clearly setting out the split of responsibilities and makes adequate provisions for the protection of public funds (e.g. arrangements to suspend or claw back funding in the event of non-delivery or mismanagement).

6. Ensuring Value For money: Prioritisations, Appraisal, Business Case Development and Risk Management

6.1. The SELEP recognises the importance of having robust arrangements in place to ensure value for money and effective delivery, through strong project development, project options and appraisal, prioritisation and business case development. This section of the Assurance Framework sets out the arrangements in place for ensuring that effective processes are in place for addressing each aspect as follows:

6.2. Options Appraisal and Prioritisation

6.2.1. As the SELEP covers such a wide geographical area encompassing a number of local authorities facing competing challenges, prioritisation of projects is most effectively managed within local areas through the federal model, with the exception of any pan-LEP priority projects which will be prioritised by the SELEP Strategic Board. This will ensure that the priorities of the strategic economic plan within functional economic areas can be delivered. The SELEP Accountability Board will oversee the delivery of the overall programme of investment and seek to ensure value for money across each of the projects.

6.2.2. Prioritisation will be undertaken by Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships through their submission to the Growth Deal and Strategic Economic Plan or to other funding opportunities.

6.2.3. They will implement scheme prioritisation in liaison with an Independent Technical Evaluator.

6.2.4. Working with the Independent Technical Evaluator, local areas will consider:

- Purpose
- Strategic Impact
- Scheme Type
- Contribution to policy objectives (economic growth and job creation)
- Value for Money / Benefit Cost Ratio
- Deliverability, including public support, affordable (taking account of any funding contribution) and deliverable within a clearly defined timescale.

6.2.5. Partners will give further consideration to eligible schemes following a sifting process based on the Department for Transport's EAST tool, any SELEP Prioritisation Framework, Health Assessment and Highways Agency's Project Appraisal Report or other appropriate appraisal tools. Checklists for this work will be provided to partners by the Independent Technical Evaluator to ensure a consistent approach.

6.2.6. Assessment criteria shall include:

- Value for Money – based on Benefit Cost Ratio and wider Economic Benefits.
- Environmental and Community Impact – Potential benefits and adverse impacts.
- Contribution to Objectives – SELEP Strategic Economic Plan, Local Transport Plan Objectives.
- Deliverability – affordability, Practicality, key risks, stakeholder and public support

6.2.7. Any Business partner of a scheme, having first gained local partnership support shall develop that scheme in consultation and agreement with the local partnership at every stage of the project and no scheme or programme can be implemented without the support of the LEP and local partnerships under the Assurance Framework.

6.3. Programme Management and Investment Decisions

6.3.1. Business Cases

- 6.3.1.1. Scheme Partners will develop business cases, including a Value for Money (VfM) statement in accordance with the SELEP agreed proportionate business case assessment process which is outlined in the SELEP Growth Deal and Strategic Economic Plan. Through the SELEP Capital Programme Manager, the Independent Technical Evaluator will provide advice to partners on applying the assessment process on a scheme by scheme basis.
- 6.3.1.2. Business cases will follow the Department for Transport Business Case Guidance and WebTAG or similar non-transport national guidance appropriate to their scheme with appropriate proportionality as set out. Schemes will be expected to pass the equivalent of a Programme Entry and Final approval stages.
- 6.3.1.3. For transport schemes, central case assessments shall be based on forecasts consistent with the latest version of National Trip End Model (NTEM) and the appraisal results included in the business case to be considered by the SELEP.
- 6.3.1.4. For Skills schemes funded by the current LGF programme, the business cases will be evaluated as part of a bidding process for the funding which includes a technical evaluation by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA); for these schemes a separate assessment by the SELEP ITE will not be undertaken as this is incorporated as part of the evaluation of the bid, based on the advice from the SFA.
- 6.3.1.5. Each business case shall set out a statement of objectives and the specific outcomes that the scheme is intended to achieve. The business cases will include sign-off by the promoting local authority and its S151 Officer before being submitted.
- 6.3.1.6. The Independent Technical Evaluator will independently assess the business cases and will in the first instance, make recommendations to the local authority partner.
- 6.3.1.7. The Independent Technical Evaluator will ensure that the approach taken by partners is technically robust, consistent with technical guidance and able to withstand scrutiny. In so doing, the Independent Technical Evaluator will collaborate with partners to minimise the time and cost associated with preparing business cases by adopting practices which are proportionate to the specifics of each scheme.
- 6.3.1.8. The ITE will work with scheme partners to evaluate business cases on a staged basis as follows:

| Assurance Level | Gate |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing the scope of work for an outline business case | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gate 0 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving assurance for an outline business case | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gate 1 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving assurance and approval for a final business case for projects under £8M | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gate 2 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving assurance for submission to DfT for larger projects over £8M | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gate 3 + Gateway review co-ordination. |

6.3.1.9 For projects that have their business case assessment undertaken by the Government, or their nominated evaluator, due to the significance of the scheme or that the funding is being retained centrally; in these instances, the role of the SELEP ITE will be to review the business case assessment provide professional advice to the Accountability Board of any key risks or issues arising from that assessment that need to be considered by the board to support the associated decision for funding.

6.3.1.10 For projects seeking funding to support development of business cases, the role of the SELEP ITE will be to review the case to develop the business case to provide professional advice to the Accountability Board of any key risks or issues arising from that assessment that need to be considered by the board to support the associated decision for funding. In such instances, it is expected that the advice will include an indication of whether or not the business case to be developed with the funding will be expected to meet the value for money assessment criteria as set out below.

6.3.2. Value for Money

6.3.2.1. The Independent Technical Evaluator shall assess that all evidence provided by the partner, including VfM, is robust and relevant, and report back to partners on any inconsistencies that need to be addressed if the scheme is to go forward for consideration for funding. Value for money is assessed on the basis of the methodology outlined in The Green Book published by the Treasury; this assessment includes the calculation of the benefit cost ratio, used as an indicator of VfM.

6.3.2.2. To receive a recommendation for approval, schemes should have a benefit cost ratio of at least 2:1. Schemes with less than high VfM but with a benefit cost ratio of at least 1.5:1 may still be recommended for funding if they meet two or more of the following criteria:

- where there is an overwhelming strategic case (with minimal risk in the other cases);
- where scheme benefits are notoriously difficult to appraise in monetary terms and there are qualitative benefits which if monetised would most likely increase the BCR above two-to-one; and
- where schemes are less than £1.0m and to conduct further quantified and monetised economic appraisal would be disproportionate.

6.3.2.3. Prior to approval, the SELEP Accountability Board will review the VfM statement when schemes are presented for approval to ensure that they meet the criteria set out in 6.3.2.2 above.

6.3.2.4. The Accountable Body will ensure that all projects send for approval to the Accountability Board include a VfM statement that has been prepared in line with the requirements set out in this Assurance Framework.

- 6.3.2.5. The business cases and VfM statements, following scrutiny by the Independent Technical Evaluator, shall be reported and published at each stage of approval.
- 6.3.2.6. The Secretariat will ensure the business cases are published on the SELEP web site once the projects are approved by the Accountability Board, to enable input from the public, businesses, environmental groups and other interested parties.
- 6.3.2.7. As necessary, the economic cases shall be reviewed and updated to reflect changes in scheme scope, cost, and WebTAG/NTEM or relevant guidance (if this could be material in decision making).
- 6.3.2.8. On completion of a business case, the ITE will make recommendations to SELEP Accountability Board on projects that perform well against assessment process and therefore should be funded, and where projects should be reconsidered due to poor performance.
- 6.3.2.9. Successful schemes will progress to delivery via the Partner.
- 6.3.2.10. Unsuccessful schemes will be considered by the local area for deletion, revision or adding to a reserve list.

6.3.3. Release of Funding, Cost Control and Approval Conditions

- 6.3.3.1. A capped contribution from the SELEP via the Accountable Body will be made to the scheme cost where agreed and the promoting Authority will be responsible for all cost increases that may occur through the delivery period.
- 6.3.3.2. Essex County Council's S151 Officer, or their delegate according to the scheme of delegation will sign off all funding payments and these will be subject to a completed SLA between Essex County Council and the promoting local authority, or the case of funding for Skills through a Grant Agreement between Essex County Council and the respective College.
- 6.3.3.3. Funding will only be released when construction or relevant actions are approved by the Accountability Board and only in quarterly instalments, unless greater flexibility is provided in our Growth Deal arrangements.
- 6.3.3.4. Through the nominated S151 Officer, SELEP will undertake an audit of the Partner's project to ensure the correct use of funding and may, if necessary, arrange for the recovery of any funds.
- 6.3.3.5. Any under-spend of capital must be identified at an early stage so it can be potentially used on other schemes. Within agreed thresholds as outlined in section 3.3.3 this will be dealt with by the Local Area Delivery Board/Partnership, outside those thresholds this will be addressed by the SELEP Accountability Board.

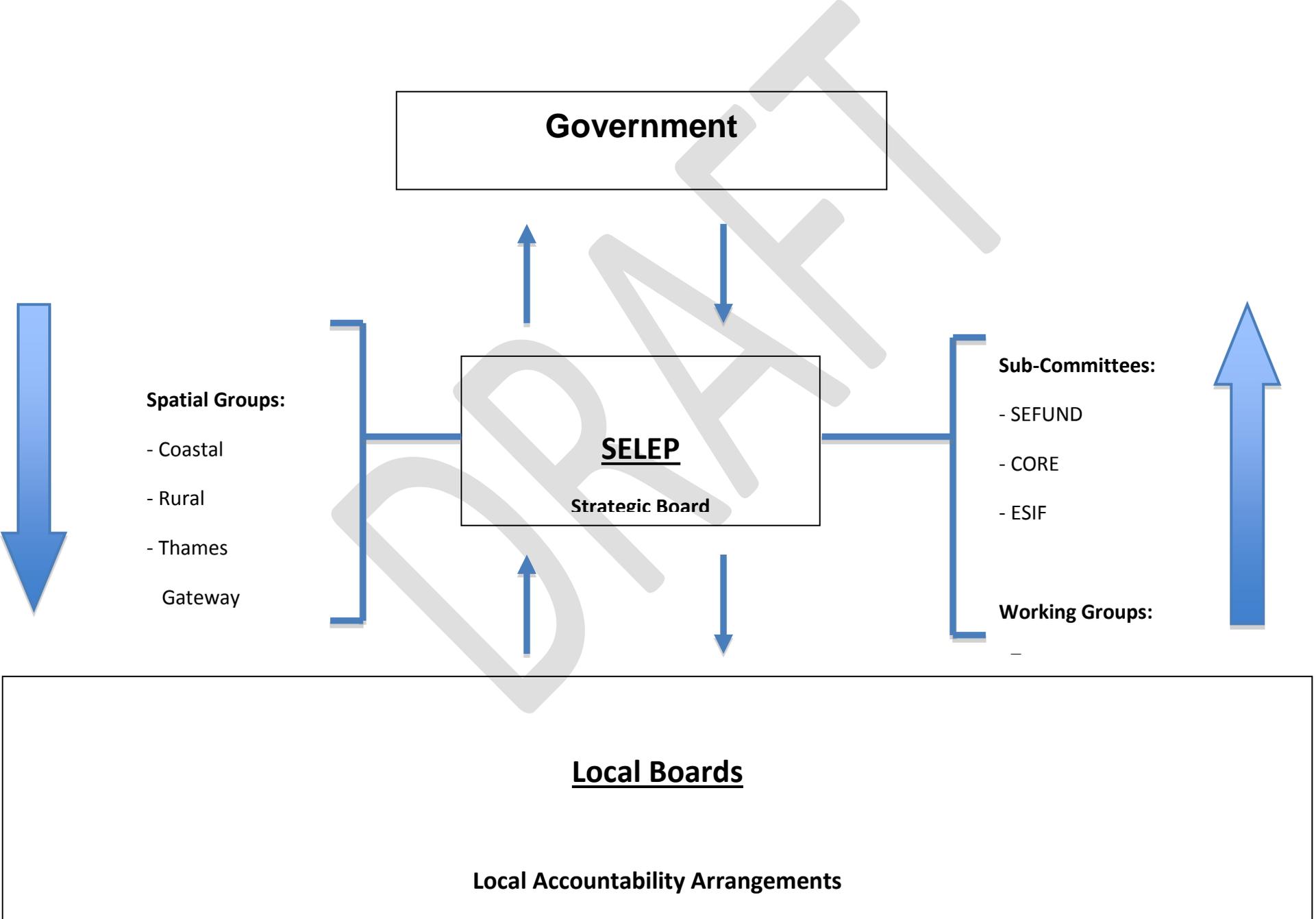
6.3.4. Programme and Risk Management

- 6.3.4.1. Working with the ITE, for each scheme that is included in the programme the partner will be required to provide an initial project programme including:
 - Outline/detailed design
 - Statutory requirements

- Consultations
- Procurement
- Construction

- 6.3.4.2. In addition a statement of risk will be provided by the partner for each scheme. The project programme and risk statement shall be kept up to date by the partner and shall be included in project reports.
- 6.3.4.3. The SELEP Accountability Board through the Local Area Delivery Board/Partnership and nominated S151 Officer shall require the partners to submit regular detailed project monitoring reports in accordance at quarterly intervals. This process will be managed by the SELEP Capital Programme Manager and will enable on-going monitoring and evaluation of individual schemes and the programme generally.
- 6.3.4.4. Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships will manage programmes within agreed local tolerances reporting to the SELEP Accountability Board, with exceptions such as significant modifications during development or even construction clearly reported for decision.
- 6.3.4.5. For transport schemes, partners shall provide an initial report, in accordance with the DfT's Monitoring and Evaluation Guidance, to the SELEP Accountability Board on data collected on both one year post scheme opening and approximately five years post scheme opening. The Accountability Board through the Secretariat shall ensure this is published on the SELEP's website.

SELEP Board and Group Structure



Groups and Sub Committees supporting the SELEP (this will be updated)

Only a limited number of working and advisory groups are recognised within the SELEP Structure, all clearly linked to the agreed SELEP Terms of Reference for the SELEP Board or to specific Board decisions.

As agreed by the SELEP Board in December 2014, there are four types of group ranging from sub-committees to informal groupings supporting a lead Board Member. All report to the SELEP Strategic Board.

1. Sub Committees

1.1 European Structural Investment Framework (ESIF)

1.1.1 The ESIF Committee is one of 39 LEP EU Sub-committees reporting to the National Growth Board. Through its Chairman, it provides regular updates to the SELEP Strategic Board.

1.1.2 Terms of reference are prescribed by the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) and include:

- Overseeing and monitoring the progress of the SELEP European Structural Investment Framework (ESIF) towards achieving its objectives and the delivery of EU SIF funding
- Considering Calls and advising on their fit with LEP priorities
- Monitoring the extent to which EU resources are being used to deliver the Growth Deal/SEP priorities and advising the SELEP Strategic Board on a regular basis
- Providing expert advice to the LEP Board on EU SIF implementation and wider EU matters

1.1.3 Membership of the ESIF Committee is prescribed by DCLG.

1.1.4 The EU Delivery Group is supported by the Government's Local Growth Delivery team.

1.2 Centre for Offshore Renewable Engineering (CORE)

1.2.1 The SELEP CORE Group is a partnership between Central and Local Government and LEPs established to ensure businesses looking to invest in manufacturing for the offshore renewables industry receive the most comprehensive support possible.

1.2.2 Full terms of reference and membership for the SELEP Group are to be published.

1.3 SEFUND

1.3.1 SEFUND is the real estate investment fund for the SELEP area, seeded by the Growing Places Fund.

1.3.2 Full terms of reference, membership and structure are to be published on establishment of the fund.

2. Spatial Groups

2.1 Coastal Communities Group

- 2.1.1 The Coastal Communities Group is an interest group of the LEP open to councils whose areas include coastal communities.
- 2.1.2 The group provides expert advice to the SELEP Strategic Board in relation to coastal issues and opportunities.
- 2.1.3 Full terms of reference and membership are to be published.

2.2 Rural Group

- 2.2.1 The Rural Group is an ad hoc group supporting the lead SELEP Board member for rural growth.
- 2.2.2 Full terms of reference and membership are to be published.

2.3 Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership

- 2.2.3 The Thames Gateway Strategic Group is an ad hoc partnership with the Greater London Authority
- 2.2.4 Full terms of reference and membership are to be published.

3. Sector Groups

3.1 U9 (Universities)

- 3.1.1 The U9 Group is an interest group of the Higher Education Sector.
- 3.1.2 All universities located in the SELEP area are represented.
- 3.1.3 Full terms of reference and membership are to be published.

3.2 Creative

- 3.2.1 The Creative Industries Group is an interest group of the creative and cultural sector formed to unleash the potential of the creative and cultural industries in the SELEP area
- 3.2.2 Terms of reference for the Group are to work together to:
 - Establish Creative Industries Innovation Hubs in SELEP local areas
 - Build incubation space for new talent alongside workspace for innovative SMEs
 - Forge stronger industry led partnerships with Higher Education
 - Devise innovative skills solutions to create new jobs
 - Grow a creative industries supply chain with London
 - Increase innovation in placemaking and tourism
 - Use the creative sector to enhance the quality of places across SELEP and attract investment
 - Use the River Thames, the coast and other natural assets as creative catalysts
 - Connect creative industries to local communities through a cultural entitlement
- 3.2.3 Membership is to be published.

4. Working Groups – Advisory to SELEP Strategic Board

4.1. Transport Working Group

- 4.1.1 The Transport Working Group replaces the Strategic Infrastructure Group (STIG) to advise the SELEP Strategic Board on strategic infrastructure issues within the SELEP area.
- 4.1.2 The Transport Working Group is advisory only providing administrative and technical support to manage the SELEP transport programme to ensure compliance with Government. It reinforces the primacy of SELEP and the Local Area Delivery Boards/Partnerships.
- 4.1.3 In undertaking this role, the Transport Working Group will make recommendations to the SELEP Board to:
- Support the SELEP Board in championing and supporting the implementation of the SELEP Growth Deal and Strategic Economic Plan
 - Make recommendations to the Accountable Body on the appointment of an Independent Technical Evaluator to support programme management and to assess and support business case development
 - Develop and agree and update as necessary a proportionate process for business case development for Board approval
 - In liaison with the Programme Manager and SELEP Accountability Board monitor delivery against agreed tolerance levels quarterly reporting to the SELEP Board and working in close liaison with Local Area Deliver Boards/Partnerships
 - Investigate and pursue where possible other sources of funding for transport infrastructure
 - Identify and investigate longer term strategic transport topics that support growth in the South East
 - Develop responses to national transport consultations and issues for consideration by SELEP Board
 - Work with the Highways Agency and Network Rail on SELEP area priorities
 - Consider cross-boundary and cross-modal strategic transport issues undertaking appropriate consultations and collaboration with other LEPs as appropriate
 - Support the SELEP Board and Accountable Body in ensuring that all Department for Transport/Treasury reporting requirements are met via the Programme Manager
- 4.1.3 Membership of the Transport Working Group is
- TWG Chairman (appointed by SELEP Board, but not necessarily a SELEP Board member) (1)
 - 1 technical representative from each Local Transport Authority (6)
 - 1 private sector representative from each Local Area Delivery Board (4)
 - Programme Manager and other members of the SELEP Secretariat as appropriate
- 4.1.3 A Vice Chairman from the LTA technical representatives shall also be appointed by the SELEP Board and will lead on technical issues.
- 4.1.4 Invitations will be extended to Network Rail, Highways Agency, Ports Authority and Department for Transport to attend each meeting as appropriate.
- 4.1.5 The meetings will be open at all times to all SELEP Board members, Council Cabinet Member and LTA officers.
- 4.1.6 The Transport Working Group will normally meet one month before SELEP Board meetings. Additional meetings will be held as necessary.
- 4.1.7 A quorum of at least 6 Full Members (or their authorised representatives) must be present for any business to be transacted at any meeting, of which at least three should be from Local Authorities.

- 4.1.8 Alternates may be appointed by their relevant organisations and will have voting rights. Other than this, only representatives agreed by a majority of the full members of the Transport Working Group may, by prior invitation, take part in the proceedings.
- 4.1.9 It is anticipated that the majority of issues considered by the Transport Working Group will be agreed by consensus – it is not a decision-making body. Where this is not possible, a simple majority vote will determine issues. Every Full Member (or their authorised representative) present has one vote on each issue.

4.2 Skills Advisory Group

- 4.2.1 The Skills Advisory Group will monitor and oversee the Skills Capital funding allocation to SELEP and to pursue new freedoms and flexibilities as defined in the Growth Deal/Strategic Economic Plan.
- 4.2.2 The Skills Advisory Group will oversee the skills capital process and system and will ensure that a pan-LEP approach to skills is managed. It replaces existing Skills Groups, but recognises the continuing desire for greater cross-LEP working by skills providers within a wider skills strategy.
- 4.2.3 As agreed at the SELEP Board in December 2014, terms of reference are to:
- Develop technical specifications and timetables with the Skills Funding Agency to administer the competitive bidding rounds for SELEP Skills Capital competition
 - Manage the relationship with the SFA, particularly relating to Skills Capital and EU programmes, advising the Board as appropriate on SELEP (not local) arrangements and providing a direct link to local areas
 - Provide specialist governance of existing ESF funding and other funding streams under LEP influence (eg EU Skills Support for Workforce)
 - Provide specialist advice to the SELEP Board and ESIF Committee on EU SIF opt-in arrangements
 - Provide expert advice to the Board on new projects as appropriate
 - Provide a direct link with officers supporting local Employment and Skills Board
 - Reflect the priorities, views and recommendations of local Employment & Skills Board, ensuring federated priorities are central to pan-LEP initiatives/funding opportunities
 - Provide expert skills advice to the LEP Board in ensuring that skills remains a high priority within the LEP
- 4.2.4 Membership includes representatives from each county and unitary authority nominated by the Employment and Skills Boards, together with representatives from HE, FE, Schools and private providers.
- 4.2.5 Full terms of reference and membership are to be published.

4.3 Housing

- 4.3.1 The Housing Group is an ad hoc group supporting the lead SELEP Board member for housing.
- 4.3.2 As agreed following consultation, its terms of reference are:
- Supporting delivery of the SELEP Growth Deal
 - Bringing together all parties (HCA, councils, developers, finance, utilities) involved to drive development forward
 - Encouraging and supporting councils to bring forward their local plans
 - Reviewing the performance of utility companies

- Promoting best practice
 - Looking across LEP boundaries
- 4.3.3 Full terms of reference and membership are to be published.

4.4 Growth Hubs

- 4.4.1 The Growth Hub Steering Group is a pan-LEP steering group to co-ordinate and the SELEP Growth Hub programme.
- 4.4.2 Membership includes officers from each county and unitary authority
- 4.4.3 Full terms of reference and membership are to be published.

4.5 SOG

- 4.5.1 The Senior Officer Group supports the SELEP Secretariat as defined in the SELEP Terms of Reference.
- 4.5.2 SOG's role is to prepare papers as required, undertake specific pieces of work as mandated by the Board and to provide technical assistance to the Secretariat and SELEP Strategic Board.
- 4.5.3 Full terms of reference and membership are to be published.

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