



Annual Conversation Preparation



Please answer each question by providing appropriate detail and using examples where possible to demonstrate where things have gone well and where they could have been better. Unless otherwise stated keep answers to **300 words**.

GOVERNANCE

1. How effectively have the accountability and decision making arrangements in your LEP's Local Assurance Framework operated over the last 12 months, including engagement with the Section 151/73 officer?

Set out here:

- whether the arrangements in the Local Assurance Framework remain current?
- how effectively have they worked and how were any issues dealt with (give examples)?
- what steps were taken to ensure changes made at the start of the year were communicated and understood by staff and board members?
- arrangements for publication of Minutes and Board Papers.
- arrangements for publication of conflicts of interest policies and updating arrangements.
- the nature of engagement of the S151/73 officer in LEP processes.
- plans to review or improve LEP assurance processes.

We strictly adhere to the provisions set out in the current version of the Assurance Framework. Accountability and decision making arrangements are provisioned by our Accountability Board which operates according to a Joint Committee Agreement as a s.101 committee of Local Government. We are supported by the Accountable Body's Member Support and Governance team in administering the Accountability Board.

The combination of the Accountability Board and the Strategic Board, the full SELEP board where businesses have the opportunity to advise on items of strategy, provides complete coverage around both solid governance and business-led strategy.

In terms of Assurance Framework arrangements, a challenge for us remains over our process for recording pecuniary interests but we are currently addressing this through a technical rebuild of the website and a new round of refreshing the declarations list according to the requirements set out by Mary Ney's review.

The Assurance Framework has been presented to and signed off by the SELEP Strategic Board and the Accountability Board takes reports on its implementation at every meeting – it is positioned to hold the secretariat team to account. Given that the SELEP team in itself is very small, all staff members have had a stake in the drafting of the Assurance Framework and are engaged with its iteration and its implementation through our monthly meetings of SELEP team staff and Accountable Body staff.

Both Accountability Board meetings and Strategic Board meetings are held in public and all materials pertaining to the meetings are available online at least a week in advance. Decision minutes relating to the Accountability Board are released on the day of the meeting and this practice is now adopted by the Strategic Board.

We are currently looking to agree new policies around Code of Conduct, Whistleblowing and Conflicts of Interest at the December 2017 Strategic Board meeting in line with the Mary Ney recommendations.

The s.151 officer is fully appraised on SELEP's work by the small team of Accountable Body officers who support the LEP's work. Furthermore, the SELEP Director reports into the s.151 officer which serves to ensure that any issues are addressed quickly and that information flows between the Accountable Body and the LEP are healthy.

Our Assurance Framework is updated annually.

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the LEP's governance structure?

Set out here:

- what are the strengths and opportunities for development of the current LEP governance structure?
- what roles and responsibilities do private sector members undertake within the Board and Sub Board structure? How effective is this and how might it be strengthened?
- what if any changes to the governance arrangements are currently being considered and over what period?
- how well is the succession planning process working in practice and what changes in board membership are anticipated within the next 12 months?
- how appropriate is the level of representation on the Board (i.e. in terms of diversity, knowledge and skills) – how might this be improved?

Our governance structure benefits from being relatively simple and from the clear distinction between the roles of the Accountability Board and the Strategic Board. It is distinguished by a federal model of operation – which allows for local determination of project priority and delivery at four sub-SELEP levels. An area for development is the reporting of board papers and minutes and decisions of the federal boards through SELEP's communication platforms; we are working on this currently.

Sub-board responsibilities of board members largely relate to the leadership of either the federal (place-based) boards, or involvement in our sector based working groups. We are working to strengthen the latter by ensuring the interests of the working groups are represented more strongly at a SELEP board level by having nominated 'board champions' who are able to bring those interests to bear.

The only substantial tweak to the governance arrangements which are currently under consideration is the establishment of an 'Investment Panel' which would provide a more streamlined way of making the overall prioritisation decisions which are otherwise undertaken by the Strategic Board. This would fit, for example, for the reallocation of Growing Places Fund money or pan-LEP prioritisation for bespoke funding bids to Government. This has been long since planned and should be agreed again by the Strategic Board in December. It is consistent with one of Mary's recommendations.

Succession planning is an area for development – whilst the Chairman position has a two year tenure, this is not the case for normal board appointments and we will be working with the federal areas to ensure that we have a sensible way of working together on refreshing the engagement of local businesses in our agenda. This dialogue with the local federal boards also extends to the diversity of the board overall and we are working with the federal boards to help us encourage as diverse a representation as possible.

3. What can Government do to better support your governance?

The Cities and Local Growth Unit wants to support your LEP to improve its governance and transparency arrangements. Please use this section to explain whether there is more we or wider Government can be doing to help facilitate this.

1. Some partners can occasionally perceive the LEP to be introducing bureaucracy for the sake of bureaucracy. Whilst this is patently not the case, it would be perhaps helpful for Government/CLoG to issue standard templates on a few matters – this would minimise those situations where requests for information on governance or compliance are met with a nil, or much delayed, response.
2. An obvious example for templates is around declarations of interest and the new requirements brought about by Mary Ney's report. Board members at SELEP and other LEPs may not always be comfortable in supplying certain information. It is my view that a national standard would alleviate some local issues and ensure fairness and parity across all LEPs.
3. Also, it would be helpful to discuss the appropriateness of the quarterly reporting requirements back to Government and what can be done to make these less onerous in the context of being continually lightly resourced and requiring a lot of coordination with local partners to derive information of sufficient quality.

DELIVERY

1. What in your investment programme has gone well?

Set out here:

- what have been some of the main achievements in your local growth programmes in the period 17/18? Please also provide a view of overall investment programme delivery to date.
- for Local Growth Fund, to what extent are you meeting/exceeding planned outputs and spending against the 2017/18 LGF award? Are you on track to deliver overall programme spend/outcomes? If so, please demonstrate. If not, set out the action you are taking to get back on track.
- for other programmes (EZs, City Deal, Growing Places Fund, Devolution Deals as **appropriate**) set out the extent to which you are meeting planned spending/output targets. Set out any good practice or issues in delivery and what you are doing to tackle them.

In accordance with our robust Value for Money assessment and funding award processes, set out in our Assurance Framework, over £347m has now been awarded to 70 LGF projects to date. These funding awards have been made to local priorities to tackle congestion, boost skills and productivity in the South East, along with delivering infrastructure to support our housing delivery.

During 2017/18 the Board has approved substantial LGF awards to projects such as the M20 Junction 10a. SELEP is working closely with Highways England and Ashford Borough Council as the project progresses through DCO and seeks full approval for project delivery by Highways England Independent Decision Committee, which will unlock SELEP's £19.7m LGF contribution to the £104m project.

Through securing LGF to complete the project, Ashford Spurs has been approved by SELEP for the award of £9.8m LGF, providing the funding required for Network Rail to progress with project delivery. Following the final award of funding in May 2017, project is on track to complete in the early part of 2018/19. This will enable international rail services to resume from Ashford International Railway Station; supporting to the retention international business within Ashford and fostering new trading relations between the Kent & East Sussex, with mainland Europe.

To date, we have spent a total of £134m LGF, with spend of a further £69m expected to be spent by the end of 2017/18 (including DfT retained schemes). This investment has seen substantial progress being made on the delivery of projects across our Growth Deal programme. In total, 17 projects have been completed to date. This includes project such as the Strategic Site infrastructure and Sovereign Harbour projects which have delivered site enabling works to unlock commercial development. To date, 3,000m² of employment space has been delivered at the Swallows Business Park site to date and there is a commitment to the delivery of the further 7,000m² of employment space at the site, owing to the LGF investment.

Many of our larger scale projects, such as Southend Airport Business Park, are progressing well with a £23m LGF investment unlocking the site for 82,000m² of employment space. To date, the spend of £3.2m LGF on the first phase of the project has delivered the site access road and an initial package of site enabling works, to enable the private sector development partners to market the site and meet the demand for much needed commercial space. In 2018, the next phase of site enabling works and the delivery of the Innovation Centre will progress.

There have been some slippages to LGF spend, which have occurred predominately due to overly optimistic delivery schedules. Where project delays have materialised, this has provided the opportunity to progress the delivery of future year projects head of schedule. As an example, the A226 London Road/ St Clements Way project was due to start in 2018/19 but has now been brought forward and was approved by the Board in 2016/17; accelerating the delivery of junction improvements to accommodate housing growth in Ebbsfleet and the Thames Estuary. Furthermore, where LGF slippage has occurred for LGF project investments, the slippage has been invested within local authority's capital programmes for return to the LGF programme in the subsequent financial year.

2. What has not gone well and what problems have arisen in the last 12 months?

Set out here:

- where issues have been encountered, what has not gone as well as expected in the previous year (e.g. projects not coming to fruition or major programmes hit by delays etc.) and what has created the problems?

As with any portfolio of projects of this scale and nature, some project delays and issues have arisen. A majority of these delays have materialised as a result of holds up to the completion of utility works, land acquisition, delays through the consultation and planning stages of the project or overly ambitious work programmes. In addition, some specific project issues have been highlighted.

Thanet Parkway project has been brought to the Board's attention owing to the current funding gap. A funding bid was submitted earlier in 2017/18 for Network Rail's New Station Fund, but provided unsuccessful due to competition with other projects which were further developed. Owing to the funding gap the project has not yet come to fruition and the planned spend of LGF spend in 2017/18 has not occurred, due to the need for SELEP to be satisfied that the project is deliverable before LGF can be awarded. SELEP is working closely with local partners to consider opportunities to bridge this funding gap, such as through discussions with potential bidders for the new South Eastern franchise and in seeking developer contributions.

The Rochester Airport project has also experienced slippage to the planned LGF spend due to delays which have occurred through the planning process, as a result of some local opposition to the project from a number of individuals. Public questions have been heard at SELEP Accountability Board, in accordance with our processes for transparent decision making by our Accountability Board. However, SELEP is assured that the award of funding to the project remains appropriate and the second planning application is now being progressed to enable the completion of the Phase 1 project.

Finally, the forecast slippage of LGF for the A13 widening retained project has been brought to the DfT's and Accountability Board's attention. SELEP has engaged in senior level discussions with officers at Thurrock Council to ensure that more robust project and programme management processes are established at a local level for the oversight of the A13 project and other LGF projects in Thurrock.

The additional flexibilities which have been awarded through 2017/18 has enabled SELEP to establish new processes for new projects to be considered for incorporation within the LGF programme, where other projects do not come to fruition or where project underspends have been identified. These processes were approved by the Board in September 2017 and are now being implemented.

3. How effective have the LEP's performance management processes, as set out in the Local Assurance Framework, been?

Set out here:

- how have you worked with projects to ensure that spend and output performance remained on track?
- what risks/problems have been identified in the last 12 months and might arise in the future?
- whether you foresaw the problems that you experienced? How have you managed risks and what remedial/mitigating actions have you taken?
- have there been situations where the performance management processes have been particularly successful? please give examples.

LGF programme management processes are fully established and working effectively. In relation to LGF, a programme consideration meeting is held on a quarterly basis. This meeting is managed by the SELEP Capital Programme Manager and is attended by the LGF programme manager/ senior responsible officer from each of SELEP's partner authorities. In advance of the meeting, a local programme update spreadsheet is prepared by each of the six partner authorities. Programme Consideration Meetings facilitate open and honest discussion about project delivery progress, LGF spend forecasts and risk management. Update reporting is agreed at the officer meeting in advance of the update being provided to the SELEP Accountability Board. This update to the Board may include recommendations, such as to accelerate LGF projects where a risk of LGF slippage has been identified.

A full LGF capital programme update is provided to the Accountability Board on a quarterly basis, involving an update on forecast LGF spend relative to the planned spend budget, which is approved by the Board at the start of each financial year, a deliverability and risk assessment for all LGF projects and escalation reporting where project issues or specific projects are identified as high risk. Where risks to LGF spend is identified by the officers, appropriate recommendations are made to the Accountability Board. Individual project update reports are also received by the Accountability Board where further consideration of the project is required, with the A13 widening project being a prime example of this.

Through the monitoring of forecast LGF spend relative to LGF available, a funding alignment issue has been identified. In 2019/20, the forecast LGF spend exceeds the LGF available, whilst in 2020/21 the amount of LGF available exceeds the planned spend. SELEP has been able to run scenario's to assess the risk this presents to the programme. Through close working with local partners some potential options have been identified to spend local funding contributions in advance of LGF to help mitigate this programme risk. However delays to the start of some project until 2020/21 may still be required if DCLG is unable to adjust the profile of funding award to SELEP.

4. How effective has the LEP been in assessing value for money and strategic fit in business cases and in developing a high quality project pipeline?

Set out here:

- any issues that have arisen in assessing value for money or ensuring that projects supported are of the greatest strategic value to your place.
- to what extent has the pipeline been used to address any gaps in the programme or slippage by projects?
- have you developed any good practice in relation to assessing vfm and developing project pipelines (please give examples)?

Robust processes are in place for the review of all project business cases by SELEP's Independent Technical Evaluator (ITE) in advance of consideration by SELEP Accountability Board for any LGF or GPF awards. Projects are only considered by the Accountability Board where they have completed the ITE process and can demonstrate compliance with SELEP's requirements for a funding award, as set out in the SELEP Assurance Framework. Evidence of compliance with the Assurance Framework is provided in all report to the Accountability Board relating to funding decisions.

Business Cases are developed by local partners using the SELEP Business Case template and a standard assessment is conducted by the ITE which considers the Green Book principals. A particular emphasis is placed on the strategic case for the intervention and the Value for Money assessment with projects being required to demonstrate a BCR of at least 2:1, following an assessment which compliance with Government guidance. Alternatively the project must comply with the two strictly defined value for money exemptions detailed in the SELEP Assurance Framework.

Business Case workshops have been organised by SELEP for local partners to help embed best practice in relation to the development of business cases and to provide information about DCLG's new land value uplift guidance. This new guidance has been applied for Business Cases for projects which have been considered by the Board over the last few months, including Southend Airport Business Park.

Project change control processes and processes for the introduction of new projects into the programme have also been introduced. The change control processes ensures that any changes to projects which may impact upon Value for Money are considered by the ITE and a record is kept of all project changes through completion of a Change Request Form and SELEP's Change Register.

Where LGF slippage or underspends are identified, processes are in place to enable the acceleration of future year Growth Deal projects. In addition, in September 2017 the Board approved an approach to enable new LGF projects to be added to the LGF programme, subject to endorsement by the Federated Board, approval by Accountability Board and the project completing the ITE process. Two new projects have been approved by the Board for inclusion in the programme following this process; Sandwich Rail Infrastructure project and Mercury Rising Theatre project.

In addition, SELEP is currently going through a process of prioritising new projects for Growing Places Fund (GPF). A prioritisation approach was agreed by the SELEP Strategic Board, which set out eligibility criteria and an assessment methodology to ensure that deliverable projects are prioritised which have a strong fit with SELEPs objective and

present high value for money. This prioritisation process has been supported by SELEP ITE, to review the business case and value for money assessment, in advance of final GPF award by the Accountability Board.

5. What can Government do to better support your delivery?

The Cities and Local Growth Unit wants to support your local growth programmes to deliver. Please use this section to explain whether there is more we or wider Government can be doing to help facilitate this.

For SELEP to plan effectively for future years of the LGF programme we seek greater assurance of LGF allocations in future years, rather than the 'indicative allocations' currently set out in the annual DCLG grant offer letter. This would enable SELEP to award funding to projects with greater certainty and projects to press ahead with greater assurance of future year funding. The current indicative allocation of LGF sets out a profile of £91.74m for 2018/19, dropping to £54.91m in 2019/20 and spiking again in 2020/21 with an allocation of £77.87m. As the profiles for these years have not been firmly agreed, for our LGF allocation from Government to align with the LGF spend forecast and delivery milestones for LGF projects, we would like to explore any opportunities available to increase the amount of LGF available in 2019/20, to be offset against the LGF allocation in 2020/21, achieving a smoother spend profile.

For our high risk projects, such as Beaulieu Park, in reality these projects are dependent on a grant being received from Central Government to bridge the funding gap, such as through the Housing Infrastructure Fund. As such, SELEP would welcome early discussions with Government on the likelihood of this funding bid proving successful or whether alternative funding options are likely to be available over the required timescales to bridge the funding gap.

We would benefit from having more levers at our disposal when it comes to encouraging the delivery of schemes at a local level. While we have positive working relationships generally across the LEP, our hands can often be tied when it comes to pushing for quicker or more effective spend against LGF profiles, for example. Ultimately, local authority partners may perceive that the reputational risks for non-delivery sits with the LEP itself and might therefore worry less about spending LGF.

It would be helpful for Government to clarify what will happen if projects extend beyond 31st March 2022, as this may enable tougher conversations with local partners and Board members in relation to timescales for projects to be substituted, if the original proposal is unlikely to come to fruition.

Furthermore, by resourcing SELEP appropriately in terms of core funding, this will enable us to provide a higher level of support to local partners in delivering the programme and to have a greater level of resilience within the team to respond to urgent requests for information. Current levels of support are entirely insufficient for an area as big as SELEP and we urgently need a refreshed dialogue with Government to address this.

STRATEGY

We recognise that significant strategic work and information was provided as part of your Growth Deal 3 submission in July 2016. This section provides an opportunity to comment on progress since then.

1. What is the vision for your place to 2030? How is the LEP going to get there? What are your key short term objectives and priorities?

Set out here:

- how effective is your Strategic Economic Plan?
- when was it last refreshed and in what ways has it been kept under active review during the last 12 months?

We are currently in the process of rewriting our Strategic Economic Plan and this is due to be approved by the SELEP Strategic Board in March 2018.

Our previous document has acted as a useful reference document for many in terms of understanding the universe of projects into which the LEP might take an interest. We also continue to use it as the basis of assessing strategic alignment and value for money of business cases which go through our Independent Technical Evaluation process.

The aim of the refresh of the plan is to create a more concise, more coherent strategy which takes SELEP on to the next level and takes account of both the current state of the economy and the progress that has been made by the LEP since the first plan was put together.

Over the course of the past 18 months SELEP has matured to the point where it has submitted joint priority lists and has agreed on shared themes. The new SEP will develop this further and provide a modern action plan to ensure that the added value of the partnership is brought to the fore and that we bring our aggregate power to bear.

We will use the Annual Conversation to highlight progress to date.

Our vision is and will continue to be to strengthen the economy which makes the rest of the UK tick. It will be to ensure that our places are thriving and growing and that we have maximised the opportunities of the new economy between Essex and Kent that the Lower Thames Crossing could bring. It will see the Thames Estuary reinvigorated and will be characterised by inclusive and good growth. As currently drafted, our overarching themes are as follows:

- A business infrastructure fit to drive UK plc
- A digital DNA energising our communities
- An amplified collective voice to 'positively disrupt' and drive change
- A flexible South East embracing inclusive growth and resilience by working smartly with our neighbours
- Productivity and growth increased through equipping South East employers with people skilled for the future

Clearly, we will work to ensure that there is smooth read-across between this document and the Industrial Strategy wherever possible.

2. How successful has the LEP been at engaging local partners and the wider community in delivering local growth? How successfully have you worked with different political entities in your area?

Set out here:

- how have you engaged local stakeholders about your strategy and ambitions for the LEP?
- how do you work with different political entities (such as MPs, Mayoral Combined Authority, Local Authorities), and do you actively work together on projects or strategies? Are there any examples of good practice?
- how have you implemented the guidance on branding in relation to Growth Deal projects?

Our approach to engaging local partners is both sophisticated and comprehensive. SELEP works to a federal model of operation which engages a broad church of local authorities, businesses and HE and FE representatives in Essex, South Essex, Kent and Medway and East Sussex. This is in addition to the reach of the SELEP Strategic Board itself.

Additionally our work is underpinned by a suite of 'working groups' which are led by third parties – often local businesses and sometimes local political leaders. SECEN (South East Creative Economy Network), our creative group, is perhaps the best example. It is a mixture of business, FE, HE, venues, artists and others and is fully representative of the area and totally conversant in SELEP's aims around its particular agenda.

As we have been engaging on the refresh of the Strategic Economic Plan, we have addressed all the aforementioned groups and many other interested parties, including airports, ports and neighbouring LEPs. We have recently undertaken a set piece business engagement event in collaboration with Highways England, which was successful in generating lots of positive media coverage, awareness and buy in to the LEP's overall direction of travel.

In addition to our close work with local authorities, we supply local MPs with briefings on the LEP and its progress, and the Chairman and Director have engaged in 121s with those MPs who have taken an interest in the LEP's agenda. We are currently working with Greg Clark MP on post-Brexit cross channel issues; and expect this to gain more momentum in the New Year. We've previously been engaged with other MPs on task forces relating to rail improvements and indeed are currently supporting the GEML Task Force and Vicky Ford MP's activities in support of the future build of Beaulieu Park station in North Chelmsford.

We have tried to encourage our local authorities to use Growth Deal branding in line with the guidance and SLAs for LGF funding, but can face issues in trying to achieve this. This is an area that we would like to explore during the Annual Conversation.

3. How successful have you been in working across borders and project types?

Set out here:

- where you have worked across different functional geographies and whether you actively work together with other areas or bodies on different themes or projects?
- any examples of good practice. Please state any involvement you have had in engaging with the development and implementation of initiatives such as the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine.

Our work with our neighbouring areas has increased exponentially over the past year. For example, we are working closely with Hertfordshire LEP on planning for housing developments at Harlow/Gilston; we are invested in the Thames Estuary Production Corridor work (co-led by GLA and SELEP); and we are leading a tri-LEP Energy Strategy by working with our southern neighbours – Coast to Capital and Enterprise M3. We have also seen tremendous value in the best practice and buddying processes encouraged by the LEP Network.

We are also able to demonstrate that we are supportive of a range of different project types, using, for example, our recycled Growing Places Fund to support creative initiatives and deploying flexed Local Growth Fund on a broader suite of projects (such as theatre expansion) according to the requirements of our federated areas.

We are also using our Growing Places Fund revenue to support initiatives emanating from the working groups – thus far having supported two visitor economy focused projects and development and marketing work for the North Kent Enterprise Zone.

We remain closely engaged with the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission through both SELEP and the Opportunity South Essex federated board. Recognising this as an ongoing priority for SELEP, we expect to continue to focus our efforts on making a success of the recently reinvigorated commission and to play a part in delivering short term measures which contribute to the overall vision using all means available to us.

4. How can Government support you in the next 12 months?

The Cities and Local Growth Unit wants to support you to realise the potential of your place. Please use this section to explain whether there is more we or wider Government can be doing to help facilitate this.

Positive public reassurances around the role of LEPs generally would be very helpful.

There is a perception that local authorities have more influence over LEPs than businesses and due to the way in which we are core funded, it is obviously true that we have to ensure that our activities are largely congruous with the expectations of those sponsoring local authorities. This creates issues around our perceived level of independence which is an area which we should explore together over the coming months. We would welcome these conversations.

We are very keen to encourage a culture of ‘we are all the LEP’ and avoid the creation of any false perceptions about what the LEP does or doesn’t do. We need our local authorities to consistently stand behind us and we need local business to always feel like they’ve got something at stake. A more joined up CLoG and LEP approach to communications and marketing would probably help here. Again, it would be very helpful to discuss this at the Annual Conversation.

Annex B: Section 151/73 Assurance Statement

The Section 151/73 Officer should here provide a report to the Annual Conversation 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 issued raised in Annex A. **(max 500 words)**

The close working arrangements between Essex County Council and SELEP have continued in 2017. A number of my officers work very closely with the SELEP and it is evident that their advice and counsel is sought, and their recommendations implemented.

I am satisfied that SELEP is meeting its obligations under the current Assurance Framework and the Secretariat and both Boards have made good efforts to improve transparency and accountability throughout the year. In addition, SELEP Officers are required to adhere to Essex County Council policies and procedures. This gives me additional assurance on matters such as procurement and officer code of conduct.

At this time there are no specific issues of concern to be raised on governance or transparency.

However, whilst I have no concerns, there are some matters of best practice that I would wish to see the SELEP team work towards over the next 12 months.

1. **Membership of Strategic Board** – current arrangements allow for Board Members representing Federated Boards to not be named individuals and to change from meeting to meeting. This makes identification of the membership of the Board difficult and less transparent than it could be. It also complicates the position vis à vis Declarations of Interest. I recommend that Federated Boards identify a main representative for the Board and named substitutes, all of whom should complete full declarations of interest to be published on the SELEP website to provide greater confidence in respect of decision making.
2. As referenced in section 2 above, I recommend the revision of the Strategic Board Terms of Reference to limit the serving terms of the Non Local Authority Strategic Board Members. The selection of Non Local Authority members has been made more transparent but a restriction of term would assist in succession planning. Greater turnover in Board Members may allow for a more diverse Board, as currently the Strategic Board is not representative of the population of the South East.
3. **Declarations of Interest** – there is more work to be done on maintaining and updating the Register of Interests that is published on the website, as acknowledged in the report above. Current declarations are not compliant with the Mary Ney recommendations. My officers are also working with the SELEP team to ensure a more pro-active approach to and management of declarations of conflicts of interest at Board meetings.
4. **Federated Board Decisions** – under the federated model, a number of decisions are made at Federated Boards rather than Strategic Board. The governance and transparency arrangements for those Boards are not currently equivalent to those of the Strategic Board. It is my recommendation that Strategic Board requires its Federated Boards to implement and comply with the requirements of the Assurance Framework pertaining to transparency and accountability of decisions. This would

include the timely notification of membership, meetings and publication of minutes and decisions.

It should be noted by Government that increasing requirements for governance do necessitate increased resource and both the SELEP team and the Accountable Body team supporting the SELEP are very small. Recognition of this impact should be made by Government through increased revenue allocation to SELEP.

Section 151/73 Sign-off:

Signed: 

Name: Margaret Lee

Position: Executive Director Corporate and Customer Services (S151 Officer)

Date 30 November 2017

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. In particular, you 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 Conversation process (in April 2018). You should cover any Overview and Scrutiny function undertaken by the Accountable Body. **(max 500 words)**

To Whom it may concern

We are satisfied that the South East LEP's governance arrangements are robust and that we remain committed to being transparent in all of our activities.

The South East LEP's Assurance Framework is comprehensive and regularly refreshed, and this year will be refreshed in line with the recommendations from Mary Ney's review of LEP Governance and Transparency. We will shortly be in a position to be fully compliant with this review, and well in advance of the 28th February deadline.

Having taken part in Mary Ney's review, we feel that we were able to communicate there, and have replicated above, the uniqueness and robustness of SELEP's governance arrangements. Our federal model provides us with the maximum level of engagement with local politicians and businesses; and our Accountability Board is an exemplar in terms of LEP decision making.

We are indebted to the ongoing support of Essex County Council in their Accountable Body role.

Sincerely

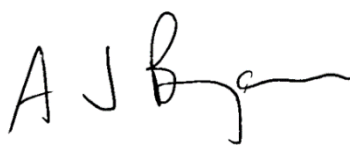
**Christian Brodie and Adam Bryan
December 2017**

Chair & Chief Executive Sign-off:

Signed: 

Name: Christian Brodie

Position: Chair

Signed: 

Name: Adam Bryan

Position: Managing Director

Date: 29th November 2017

Date: 28th November 2017