

<b><u>Subject: Assurance Framework 2019</u></b>	
<b>Author: Lyn Davies/Nigel Tipple</b>  <b>Tel: 0345 2411196</b>  <b>Email: lyn.davies@OxfordshireLEP.com</b>	<b>Board Meeting 18</b> <b>27<sup>th</sup> February 2019</b> <b>Agenda Item no: 06</b>
<b>Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Ltd:</b> <b>Business Centre, Jericho Building, City of Oxford College Campus, Oxpens Road, Oxford</b> <b>OX1 1SA</b>	

### 1.) Summary

The report seeks to advise the Board of the changes required to ensure compliance and to note the changes proposed to ensure compliance, the following areas are addressed in our paper:

- Check list response to ensure compliance following changes to guidance by March 2019
- Specific actions we need to take associated with Board membership, diversity statement and recruitment/rotation
- Proposals for meeting the Delivery Plan template requirements
- Business Plan timetable for sign off

### 2.) Recommendation

**That following committee review the Board approves:**

- **The changes to the Assurance Framework detailed at Annex 1 for final sign off by board prior to 31<sup>st</sup> March; by written procedures where needed,**
- **The Board Director recruitment pack and timetable at Annex 2,**
- **The Diversity and Equality Statement attached at Annex 3,**
- **The appointment of Miranda Markham as Diversity and Gender Champion.**

**That the Committee notes the following:**

- **The proposed changes to our Operating Plan template to meet Delivery Plan reporting requirements including the change of document name.**

### 3.) Next steps

#### **Assurance Framework**

The board will be aware that Government issued revised national assurance framework Guidance following the conclusion of the Mary Ney and Ministerial LEP Reviews. These were in response to the PAC Investigation into LEP transparency, the result is a prescriptive set of measure designed to ensure

consistency across all LEPs and clear accountability in all we do. This principle is welcomed and we are committed to meet these requirements within the time frames set out.

Attached at Annex 1 is our narrative response to the checklist which we are using to manage the drafting changes to our current Assurance Framework and where needed to our web-site. We are confident that we will be fully compliant by the end of March 2019 as we have already responded in large part to review recommendations as they emerged including where we can predict forthcoming requirements and get in front of the game. We simply need to add the actions and narrative to our 2019 Assurance Framework document, implementation has been ongoing since the publication of each recommendation.

We are already working on the changes identified at Annex 1, and we have secured the necessary 151 sign off needed. This provides assurance to government and will trigger the “core funding” negotiations for 2019/20, critical given the “going concern” status requirements of our External Audit.

### **Board Recruitment**

The committee will recall we prepared a detailed analysis of current board Directorships in November and agreed to move to a recruitment exercise this spring, Attached at Annex 2 we set out the timetable and process we propose to follow this time around. This reflects consistently the approach we have taken to ensure transparency though we will be placing emphasis this time around diversity and gender. In this regard we are required to prepare a Diversity Policy which we have at Annex 3 and to appoint a Diversity & Gender Champion on the Board. We are committed to do this, indeed we have already discussed the potential of Miranda Markham taking up this role, Miranda has confirmed her interest in the role and we propose to formalise this subject to Board agreement.

The Board will note that a further change was to meet the Assurance Framework requirements that LEP Boards must be at least 2/3rds Business, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> Local Authority representation. In our case that requires us to have 12 Business Directors and 6 Local Authority Directors. As I (CEO) cannot be counted in these numbers, we agreed to recruit an additional Board director when going out to the market. We will also promote the opportunity to strengthen our diversity with active campaigns and promotion across our diverse business community. We would welcome strong representation of both women and a younger profile of business leaders on the Board as part of strengthening our diversity. We will consider best practice elsewhere across industry and other LEPs to help us achieve the diversity we would like to see.

It is worth reflecting that government are clear that those organisations who nominate representatives onto LEP Boards must themselves consider diversity along with the skills and experience needed when reviewing nominations. This is work in progress and for us to be compliant with the Assurance Framework requirements, our Board must be at least 1/3<sup>rd</sup> women by March 2020 and have equal representation by 2023. This is the challenge set for us and we are committed to responding positively.

### **Producing a Delivery Plan**

As part of the governments development of the Assurance Framework, and in response to the many reviews and associated changes proposed, Thematic Groups were established in partnership with the LEP Network. One of these was focused upon Project and Programme delivery/reporting.

We adopted our current Operating Plan process in 2014, its oversight through the Programme Sub-Group and scrutiny provided by both Committee, Sub-Groups and ultimately Board is robust. The LEP Network working group has produced a template to be adopted by all LEPs ensuring consistency

of reporting. Whilst this is not onerous, it does require us to make some changes to our existing operating plan. The changed format will also be used to brief the Growth Board and be uploaded onto our web site replacing the operating plan from April 2019 onwards.

- To prepare a “draft” or “Delivery Plan Light” version (in compliant format) by the end of April 2019,
- Sign off by Programme sub-group in April 2019
- And, submitted to government (and on our web site) by the end May 2019.

We would then continue to refine the Delivery Plan content over the course of the year, working across LEPs with MHCLG/BEIS engagement. We are advised that a standard statement was being prepared by the LEP working group and Government Officials which should be used on all documents, effectively an introduction to the document/purpose etc. This is to be circulated by the LEP Network and will be adopted by all.

#### **4.) Conclusion**

The full implications of the National Assurance Framework are becoming clearer, the pressure for transparency increases and resources remain constrained, but we are looking to create as much organisational resilience as possible through automation and systematisation. This increased administrative responsibility will put pressure on staff resources and therefore we will work with government to secure additional operational, rather than programme resources, to support this.