

<u>Subject:</u> Assurance Framework Compliance 2019	
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Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Ltd: Business Centre, Jericho Building, City of Oxford College Campus, Oxpens Road, Oxford OX1 1SA	

1.) Summary

The report advises the Board of the status of our compliance with the Assurance Framework. We had three areas where action was needed to ensure compliance or best practice adoption, these were

- Board Director recruitment and induction (Annex 1)
- Nolan Principles – website and staff handbook
- Diversity statement – action from Feb Nominations and Personnel Committee meeting
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The Board will also note the actions highlighted in the Programme Sub-Group paper at Item 6 of the agenda where we pick up the project spend improvement plan requirements. These were flagged as part of the Annual Performance Review (APR) Report and reflect the complexity of large infrastructure programmes.

2.) Recommendation

That the Committee:

- **Notes the progress made to date and compliance with the Assurance Framework and APR requirements.**

3.) Progress made

Board Recruitment

The committee will recall we prepared a detailed analysis of current board Directorships in November 2018 and agreed to move to a recruitment exercise this spring. Following further discussion with the Cities and Local Growth Team and LEP Network we moved to advertise the vacancies in late May 2019 as part of a pilot process to introduce a more structured Induction and Training process for Board directors. This pilot guidance is attached at Annex 1 for information. The approach we have taken this time around is to proactively promote the gender and diversity opportunities, building upon

Assurance Framework requirements and our commitment to meet the gender targets set of 1/3 Female Board Directors by March 2020 and increasing to ½ by March 2023.

The recruitment programme is as follows:

Advertised:	Wednesday 29 th May 2019
Closing date:	Wednesday 3 rd July 2019 (5pm)
Short-listing:	W/C 15 th July 2019
Interviews:	W/C 22 nd July 2019

The committee will recall we prepared an Equality & Diversity Policy and appointed a Gender Champion on the Board - Maranda Markham. Miranda has already offered to host a reception at Bicester Village as part of the latest recruitment exercise to champion the Board Director opportunities to a female business leader's audience. This initiative, alongside more traditional advertising, web site and social media targeting in addition to circulation through our Business Networks we are confident will ensure a successful recruitment campaign.

The recruitment process will be overseen by the Nominations and Personnel Committee before bringing forward a recommendation to the Board and AGM in September 2019. Once completed, not only will we have improved our diversity and gender balance (hopefully) on the Board but we will also have addressed the need to have 2/3rds of the Board as Business Directors; maintaining the required balance of Local Authority and Business/Private Sector representation. We have considered best practice elsewhere across industry and other LEPs to help us achieve the diversity we would like to see and have engaged with organisations such as "Women on Boards" to promote the opportunity.

It is also worth noting that the recent Local Government elections and subsequent changes in political control has resulted in 2 new Leaders being appointed in South and Vale respectively, both of whom are eligible to join the Board and are strong female Leaders. Following early engagement with both Cllr Susan Cooper – South Oxon and Cllr Emily Smith – Vale we have secured two nominations to the Board. The South Oxon Leader has nominated Cllr Sue Roberts Portfolio Holder for Climate and Ecological Crisis whilst Cllr Emily Smith (Vale Leader) has taken up the nomination personally. We are currently completing the necessary paperwork to register both as Directors at Companies House and completing the Declaration of Interest requirements.

We are therefore currently compliant with the March 2020 gender requirements set in the Assurance Framework and potentially we can strengthen that position with the latest recruitment; in so doing respond positively to the challenge set for LEPs by government.

Nolan Principles – Directors and Staff

Again, a requirement of governments 2019 Assurance Framework was to ensure all Directors and Staff complied with the Nolan Principles. We have always ensured that Board Directors signed up to the "code" as part of their appointment and induction. In the spirit of transparency and best practice, we have extended that compliance to all staff, incorporating the Nolan principles and code into the companies Staff Handbook. This ensures all staff commit to meeting those standards and "sign" to confirm they have received and understood the requirements as part of their induction process.

It is fair to say we have always operated within the spirit of the Nolan Principles; however, we now embed that commitment within our formal processes. We can now be confident that we are fully compliant in this regard and have published the Staff Handbook on the web site along with all other policy documents.

Diversity Statement

The Committee will recall that we put in place a best practice statement and commitment to driving diversity in all we do, both internally and operationally. During the latest spot checks by the CLG compliance team they flagged that we had not included an explicit commitment to the gender targets in our Diversity Statement, they are now included. Our attention now turns to reviewing how we embed the commitment in all we do, we will establish a small working group to review best practice and make future recommendations via the Nominations and Personnel Committee. We will aim bring recommendations back to Board in December 2019 as resources allow.

4.) Conclusion

The full implications of the National assurance framework following the LEP Review are becoming clearer, however as pressure for transparency increases and resources remain constrained we are looking to adopt as much best practice as possible. The measures taken to date and planned will give us the best chance of improving both our diversity and gender balance alongside meeting the increased transparency requirements of the Assurance Framework and APR process.