



OxLEP Ltd Assurance Framework

Background to the LEP

Formally launched by the Business Minister, Mark Prisk MP, in March 2011, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) is a business led strategic body with members and stakeholders from the business community, further/higher education, local authorities, and other sectors. By working with these partners, OxLEP plays a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertakes activities to drive forward sustainable economic growth and create new jobs across the county.

Executive Summary

We have secured £242m through the Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal, Growing Places fund, ESIF and Local Growth funds focused upon driving economic growth through innovation. We have also been successful in securing a £215m Housing and Growth Deal working with our partner Local Authorities and a further £35m in Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) via Homes England. The latest HIF allocation in March 2019 has seen a further £218m secured to support infrastructure investment for Didcot Garden Town. Our strategy aligns to governments Industrial Strategy and builds upon our Strategic Economic Plan, defining three thematic priorities, Place-making, Productivity and Connectivity focused on meeting the needs of our businesses and communities building on the area's research and development rich economy. In so doing, we are looking to place Oxfordshire in the top 3 global innovation eco-systems and building strong collaborations with our partners cross the Oxford – Cambridge Arc.

To advance the delivery of our Vision through the LIS – and to build on the progress we have already made in pursuit of the objectives set out in our SEP – we will now focus delivery around our 3 thematic objectives;

Place-Making Provide a quality environment and choice of homes needed to support growth and capitalise upon the exceptional quality of life, vibrant economy and the dynamic urban and rural communities of our county.

Productivity Deliver and attract specialist and flexible skills at all levels, across all sectors, as required by our businesses, with full, inclusive employment and fulfilling jobs. To encourage innovation led growth, underpinned by Oxfordshire's strengths in University research and development, business collaboration and supply chain potential.

Connectivity Allow people to move freely, connect easily and provide the services, environment and facilities needed by a dynamic, growing and dispersed economy.

Purpose of the Assurance Framework

This document sets out our Assurance Framework for the management of risks and explains the governance framework in place to support our operations and decision making. It is important that stakeholders are clear as to how decisions are made,

projects are planned, and resources are managed effectively. We are committed to developing and implementing an assurance Framework that will provide a systematic and consistent delivery approach. This document will be used by the Board, Corporate Management Team, our accountable body and partners to identify, monitor and evaluate strategic risks to funded projects.

An assurance framework is a structured means of identifying and mapping the main sources of assurance in an organisation, and co-ordinating them to best effect. It also allows our accountable body, Oxfordshire County Council, to ensure we have adequate controls in place over the use of public funds and are complying with them.

The purpose of this document is to provide assurance to all involved in programme, project delivery and the management of strategic and operational issues, as well as all our stakeholders, that:

- governance is in place for delivering growth deal programme through our Board and Growth Board structures;
- effective programme and project management tools are being used to improve decision making;
- approved Financial Regulations and Schemes of Delegation are in place and are complied with;
- risks are captured according to agreed processes, are regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure the mitigation is effective;
- resources are appropriate which will allow us to carry out our obligations effectively; and will
- all members and partners are informed of all decisions and updates accordingly.

1 Details of OxLEP

- 1.1 Initially established as a partnership with the local authorities in the area, OxLEP was incorporated as a not for profit company limited by guarantee on 31st March 2015. The decision to incorporate OxLEP was taken to improve the governance arrangements of the organisation by formalising roles and responsibilities and establishing a clear, decision making structure. As a company OxLEP is bound by the requirements of private sector accounting and accountability and its Board members are directors as per the definition in the Companies Act. This places additional governance requirements on them as individuals and as part of the wider Board.
- 1.2 OxLEP covers the geographical area of the county of Oxfordshire, which includes Oxfordshire County Council and the five district councils of Cherwell, West Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, South Oxfordshire and Oxford City Council.



- 1.3 Oxfordshire is notable for the excellence and scale of innovation, enterprise and research within the county, and for the dynamism of its economy: both employment and GVA (Gross Value Added) are growing strongly, activity and employment rates are high, and there is very low unemployment. The scale of recent investment in some of its most successful firms bodes well for the future. In addition, significant progress has been made over the last five years in delivering many of the objectives set out in the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP), which was comprehensively reviewed in March 2016.

- 1.4 We aim, with partners, to harness Oxfordshire's unique combination of assets to ensure that by 2031, the county's economy is recognised to be:

Vibrant: a place where ambitious businesses and people thrive; and where young people choose to build their careers and their lives

Sustainable: environmentally (considering patterns of resource use, climate change, carbon emissions, heritage assets), socially (reflecting the needs and character of communities) and economically (with businesses and others choosing to re-invest)

Inclusive: where all residents and businesses have a real stake and voice in determining the county's future economic narrative and contributing fully to it

World-leading: recognised globally for its dynamic innovation ecosystem, founded on world class research and fuelled by enterprise, all within an environment of the highest quality.

- 1.5 To advance the delivery of our Vision through the LIS – and to build on the progress we have already made in pursuit of the objectives set out in our SEP – we will now focus delivery around our 3 thematic objectives;

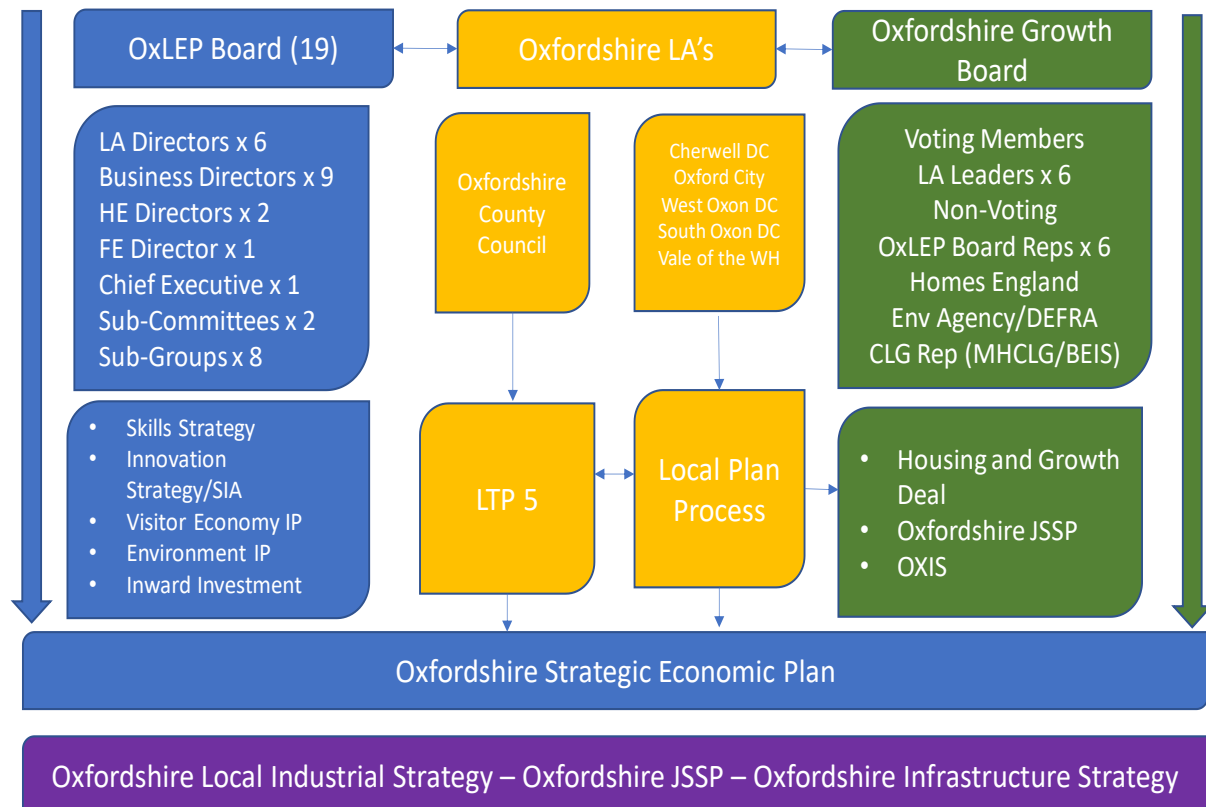
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2 Governance Relationships

2.1 The diagram below shows the key organisations and groups that feed into the activities of OxLEP, which in turn support the Local Industrial Strategy and sister documents supporting the Counties Economic Prosperity.



2.2 Ultimately accountable for our strategic direction is the Board of Directors. Our Board reflects the geographic and sectorial interests of Oxfordshire and consists of:

2.3 Chair

2.3.1 Always a Private sector representative, the Chair is appointed following an open and transparent recruitment against a person specification set out by the Board and Nominations and Personnel Committee. The Chair serves for an initial period of three years, and their responsibilities are set out in the By-Laws of the Company. These are principally to lead the strategic direction of the organisation through the Board of Directors and to support the CEO in the day to day operations of the Company.

2.4 Deputy Chair

2.4.1 The Company also has an appointed Deputy Chair, who is also a private sector representative. As well as supporting and deputising for the Chair, this individual also chairs the Nominations and Personnel Committee.

2.5 Chief Executive

2.5.1 Management and leadership on a day-day basis is devolved to the CEO, the most senior full-time, paid employee in the LEP (company). S/he is responsible for the performance of the LEP, as directed by the Board's overall strategy and direction. The main function of the CEO is to direct and control the work and resources of the LEP so that it achieves its purpose, within the limits of his/her delegated authority.

2.5.2 The key responsibilities of the CEO are to:

- Maintain an ongoing dialogue with the LEP Chair and provide strategic advice and guidance to the Chair and Board
- Lead, recruit and retain well-motivated and trained staff
- Oversee the accounts of the company and ensure their approval by the Board
- Prepare, implement and monitor an Annual Delivery Plan to ensure that the LEP achieves its objectives as cost-effectively and efficiently as possible; report progress through the publication of an annual Impact Report
- Establish and maintain effective formal and informal links with stakeholders and key decision-makers, to exchange information and views
- Maintain a research function to ensure that the LEP makes evidence-based decisions and achieves *Value for Money* in its interventions
- Prepare and monitor the implementation of the annual budget to ensure that Develop and maintain an effective communications strategy to explain and promote the role of the LEP and advocate for Oxfordshire
- Develop and direct the implementation of policies and procedures to ensure that the LEP complies with all statutory regulations and the National Assurance Framework
- Ensure that the standards of behaviour and appropriate processes are owned by the Board, staff and immediate partners.

2.6 Representatives of County Council and all District Councils

2.6.1 Since the incorporation of the company (OxLEP Ltd) in March 2015 the local authorities have all chosen to nominate their Leaders to sit on our Board, demonstrating the political importance of economic development in the region. However, in 2018 South Oxfordshire nominated a Portfolio holder Cllr Bill Service to sit on the Board.

2.7 Representatives from both Universities and one for all Colleges

2.7.1 Higher and Further Education provider engagement is vital to the development of Oxfordshire's economy and therefore representation from Oxford and Oxford Brookes universities as well as Abingdon and Witney College representing the FE sector ensures we can reflect the skills and education priorities of the County at Board level and across the Skills Sub-Group.

2.8 Private sector representatives

2.8.1 The By-Laws of the Company allow for the eight main Business Representative Organisations in Oxfordshire to nominate individuals to represent business interests on the Board. These nominations are subject to a fully transparent recruitment process including interview and panel discussion supported through the Nominations and Personnel Committee. These By-Laws were amended by agreement at the Board in December 2018 to increase the number of Business Representative Directors from Eight to Nine places on the Board. The nominating organisations include:

- Federation of Small Businesses
- Oxfordshire Chamber of Commerce
- Institute of Directors
- Confederation of British Industry
- Bicester Vision
- Science Vale Oxford UK
- Oxford Strategic Partnership
- Oxfordshire Skills Board

2.8.2 Where a body chooses not to nominate someone then we will fill the vacancy by following an open, transparent recruitment process to attract a suitably qualified and experienced individual to take the place on the Board. The current membership of the Board covers all of the eight organisations, even where not formally nominated to represent them.

Three of the eight organisations above are dedicated to Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs), and the Bicester Vision representative also currently Chairs the Business Support Sub-Group and acts as the SME Champion on the Board.

2.8.3 All Board Members are expected to comply at all times with the [Code of Conduct](#). As well as setting out their specific OxLEP roles and responsibilities, the document identifies the 7 principles of public life, also known as the [Nolan principles](#), which Directors are expected to adhere to at all times. These are:

• **Selflessness:**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest;

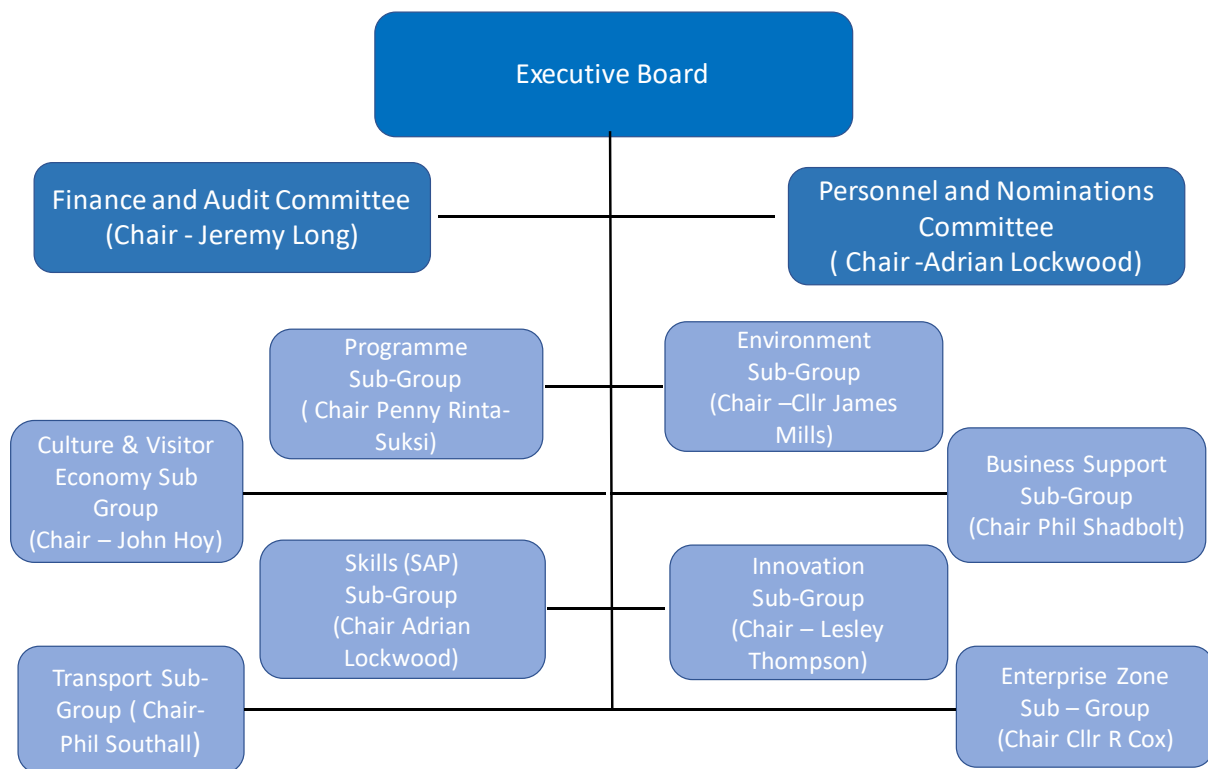
• **Integrity:**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships;

- **Objectivity:**
Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias;
- **Accountability:**
Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this;
- **Openness:**
Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing;
- **Honesty:**
Holders of public office should be truthful; and
- **Leadership:**
Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs

2.8.4 The Board meets quarterly and considers direct agenda items as well as referrals from its sub-groups and Committees. At present meetings are not open to the public, though agendas, papers and minutes are made available 5 working days in advance of the meetings, with draft minutes published 5 working days after meetings have taken place. We already hold our AGM as a public meeting and we will over the course of 2019 move to holding Board meetings in public session where appropriate. We are committed to place as much information as possible in the public domain, however due to the nature of our work there may be some papers which are not suitable for publication. We will use the [Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\)\(Meetings and Access to Information\)\(England\) Regulations 2012](#) and [Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended](#) to determine whether documents should be exempt or classified. We are reviewing the way we conduct our meetings and what information is made available to ensure stakeholders can be confident in the robustness of the decision-making process. In addition, we present updates and seek endorsement to many of our programmes of activity through the Oxfordshire Growth Board, these meetings are held in public with facility for active public participation.

Our Board Governance



2.8.5 Succession planning – The Board actively review with the support of the Nominations and Personnel Committee the succession cycle for Board Directors. The retirement and recruitment process is set out in the company’s [By-Laws](#). This includes proactive management of the retirement cycle of Directors (3years + up to 2 years), we recently reviewed and extended the terms of three Directors including the Chair and two Business representatives.

2.8.6 We have also commenced recruitment of two new Directors, these will be subject to a full open recruitment process, we will seek to encourage diversity through this process including strengthening gender balance.

2.8.7 Induction of Board Directors and staff is critically important, we are currently reviewing the induction and training process with the LEP Network to ensure consistency of approach across the 37 LEP bodies. However, in the interim we have an existing process of 1:1 briefing and familiarisation process led by the CEO for each new Board Director. Whilst this process has served us well, the LEP Network revue recommendations will be adopted once published.

2.9 Finance and Audit Committee

2.9.1 The Board has a Finance and Audit Committee to provide internal challenge and scrutiny to the financial processes and procedures within the organisation. The Committee is chaired by the Board Chairman and includes four other Non-

Executive Directors. The Committee reviews financial regulations and procedures to ensure a sound control environment is in place and receives and considers the reports from both internal and external audit on their independent assessments of that control environment. The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) from the accountable body is invited to attend all meetings along with staff involved in relevant processes. Due to the nature of the items discussed it is not possible to make the papers from these meetings public, however the key findings and all recommendations are reported to the Board and so are available in the minutes of the main Board.

2.10 Nominations and Personnel Committee

2.10.1 The Board has a Nominations and Personnel Committee which is responsible for supporting recruitment and retention of Board directors and staff. The Committee is Chaired by our Deputy Chairman and includes four other non-executive directors. The Committee is responsible for overseeing the recruitment and performance of the Board of directors and reports back to the Board on that subject. In 2018 the Committee undertook a review of the effectiveness of the Board, its committees and its sub-groups and made recommendations on how these could function more effectively.

Changes to the delegation provisions were agreed in December 2018 focused upon improving operational efficiency. The Committee delegations included approval of annual cost of living awards and performance payments where already included within annually agreed budgets. The committee also reviews the policies and procedures associated with recruitment, selection, retention and remuneration of our staff; including the Chief Executive. Any changes outside of the delegated functions will be referred to Board. As many of the matters dealt with at this Committee impact on individuals' their terms and conditions of employment etc. It is not possible to make the papers from these meetings public, however the key findings are reported to the Board and so are available in the minutes of the main Board.

2.11 Skills Sub-Group (Board)

2.11.1 The [Oxfordshire Skills Sub-Group](#) (formerly Board) brings together a wide range of public and private employers, secondary, further and higher education skills providers and stakeholder groups. Working closely with the team, the Board Sub-Group is driven to achieve improvements in the skills available to Oxfordshire's employers and the learning opportunities available to students, residents and workforce. The sub-group having revised its operational Terms of reference to meet the Skills Advisory Panel requirements the group will oversee the Oxfordshire Skills Strategy refresh and alignment with the Oxfordshire LIS. This change was approved by the Board in March 2019.

2.11.2 They are committed to brokering:

- better understanding of skills needs and priorities across Oxfordshire

- strengthened links between business and providers of learning
- improved skills and business support provision to employers
- stronger links with county and regional employment and skills bodies
- raised aspirations and economic wellbeing.

2.12 Sub Groups

2.12.1 Including the Skills Board, we have 8 working [Sub-Groups](#) to support and inform the work of the Board and Committees. These include key stakeholders and are Chaired by individuals nominated for their experience in the field, providing us with a means of engaging with key stakeholders and gaining from their experience and advice. A further review of the sub-groups, their work programmes and Terms of Reference is being conducted, this includes support to their Chairs to deliver effectively against their work plans; reporting progress to the Board.

2.12.2 In recognition of the increased scale of programme responsibility and operational delivery, we have strengthened our Programme Sub-Group oversight with responsibility for reviewing progress, programme development and consideration of project change requests in support of project delivery. To maximise the effectiveness of the Sub-Group we have delegated programme change responsibility within agreed levels (<£1m) to the Programme Sub-Group where these are within existing project budget approvals. The group chaired by a Board Director and supported by the executive team report quarterly on progress and seek the boards agreement to project change requests or variations outside of these delegation limits.

2.13 Diversity

2.13.1 When recruiting to the Board, its committees and sub-groups consideration is given to ensuring that members bring the best mix of skills and experience for delivering on our priorities and objectives. Where not filled by *ex officio* or nominated individuals, membership is based on open and transparent recruitment and the composition of the Board is reviewed by the Nominations and Personnel Committee to ensure it is representative of the local business community.

We have appointed Mrs M Markham as our Board Director Diversity Champion, she will work with the Board and Nominations and Personnel Committee to support the implementation of strengthened diversity through recruitment.

Our Diversity Statement can be found [here](#).

2.14 Overview and scrutiny

2.14.1 As well as the internal scrutiny provided by the Board, various Committees and working groups, our activities are subject to external scrutiny through the accountable bodies and local authority stakeholders. For example, the recently refreshed SEP was reviewed by all the district councils, the city council and the

county council's Performance Scrutiny Committee to ensure there was adequate, robust challenge. In addition, the Performance Scrutiny Committee of the accountable body receives an annual report from OxLEP for information and challenge.

Outside of the "Corporate" scrutiny and review, we report alongside the S151 Officer regularly to the accountable body Performance Scrutiny Panel Chaired by an independent County Councillor. This is also the route through which we report operational progress to Cabinet and Full Council as required. We have agreed to undertake a joint deep dive into the scrutiny function, with the Accountable Body, the brief for which will be agreed between the Chair of the Performance Scrutiny Panel and Executive Team. We attend and present to other District/City Council, Committees, Cabinets and Full Councils as requested on an annual basis to ensure transparency.

2.14.2 Our Board will keep the Overview and Scrutiny arrangements under review, and should it determine a dedicated resource would be beneficial then steps will be taken to establish such arrangements.

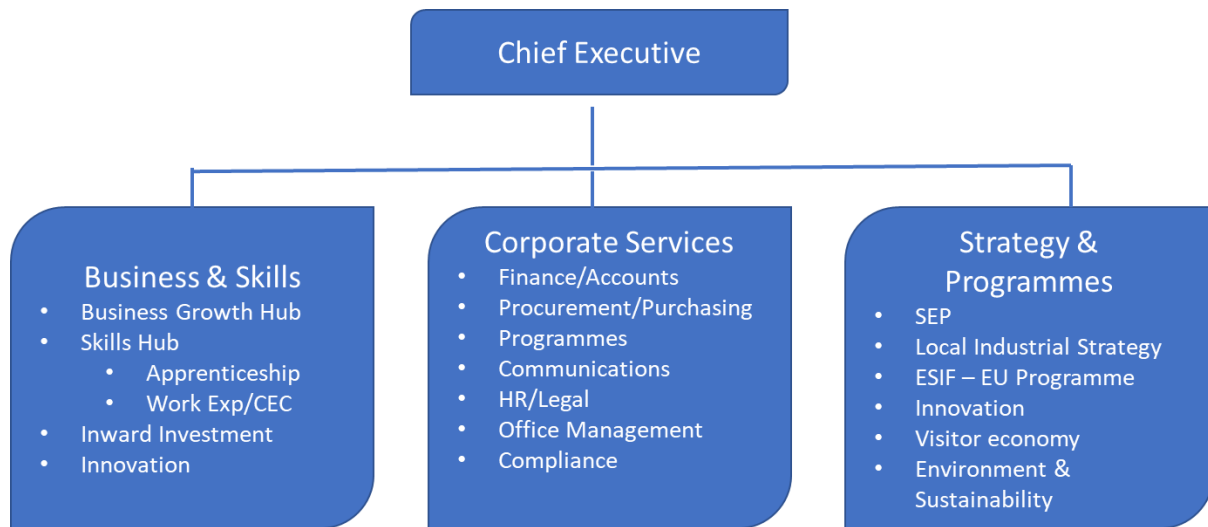
2.15 Growth Board

2.15.1 [The Growth Board](#) is a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire together with six non-voting Business Board Directors with observer status. It has been set up to facilitate and enable joint working on economic development, strategic planning and growth. It does this by overseeing the delivery of projects that the councils of Oxfordshire are seeking to deliver collaboratively in the fields of economic development and strategic planning.

2.15.2 It also oversees projects led by Local Authority partners agreed in the City Deal and Local Growth Deals and has responsibility to manage these programmes of work alongside ourselves. It also provides advice on matters of collective interest, seek agreement on local priorities and influence relevant local, regional and national bodies.

2.15.3 Growth Board meetings are open to the public, who are encouraged to participate through a structured process. All agendas, papers and minutes are publicly available via the web site. They have developed specific scrutiny oversight for the work of the Growth Board which strengthens overall transparency.

2.16 Corporate Management Team



2.16.1 The day to day operations of the company are managed by the Corporate Management Team, led by the Chief Executive. Employed directly by the company the Chief Executive enjoys certain delegated powers and his main function is to act as the bridge between the strategy and policy steer from the Board and Committees and the front-line staff tasked with delivering. The Chief Executive is supported by the Directors responsible for Business & Skills, Strategy and Programmes and Corporate Services. Regular meetings of these senior officers allow for timely sharing of information and development of programmes to maximise our contribution and effectiveness.

2.16.2 The Corporate Management Team also leads on communication both within the organisation to the Senior Management Team, as well as outside the organisation. Regular, content rich communication with stakeholders is vital to ensure the wider community is aware of the work we are undertaking and how it impacts on them.

3. Staff Salaries

OxLEP considers it important to be open and transparent about what we pay our staff.

The salary bands and number of staff within them can be found below

Salary Band	Number of staff paid within this band
£16,000 - £29,999	15
£30,000 - £49,999	11
£50,000 - £69,999	4
£70,000 - £99,999	3
£100,000 +	1

4. The role of the accountable bodies

- 4.1 Fundamental to the delivery of our programmes of work is the relationship we have with our accountable bodies. The legislation for the funding of LEPs requires funds to be paid to an accountable body, which in the case of Local Growth Funding (LGF) Growing Places Fund (GPF) City Deal and Core Funding in Oxfordshire is the County Council. The Vale of White Horse District Council acts as the accountable body for the two enterprise zones we work closely with OCC to provide information for financial monitoring and reporting purposes.
- 4.2 As well as providing invaluable support and advice, the accountable bodies perform a number of operational functions on our behalf, such as financial and legal advice, procurement services and so on, which are set out in signed Memoranda of Understanding [OCC MoU](#), [SV01 MoU](#) and [SV02 MoU](#).
- 4.3 Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) is our accountable body supporting delivery of all funding that comes from Central Government currently the GPF, City Deal and Growth Deal programmes. All expenditure incurred on our behalf by OCC is subject to their policies, procedures and regulations to ensure the highest levels of financial probity.
- 4.4 An effective working relationship has been established between the company and OCC, to deliver on the shared goals and ambitions for infrastructure development in Oxfordshire. OCC staff contribute to strategic and operational decision making and implementation as well as helping us engage with our stakeholders and the wider Oxfordshire population.
- 4.5 The use of resources are subject to the usual local authority checks and balances – including the financial duties and rules which require councils to act prudently in spending, which are overseen and checked by the Chief Finance Officer – the Section 151 Officer.
- 4.6 The responsibilities of the accountable body cover the following:
- ensuring decisions and activities relating to grant funding under section 31 of the Local Government Act conform with all relevant law (including State Aid and public procurement) and ensuring that records are maintained so this can be evidenced;
 - ensuring that the funds are used in accordance with the conditions placed on each grant where the Accountable Body receives the funds on our behalf;
 - supporting actions identified in the local assurance framework is adhered to;
 - maintaining an official record of grant funding provided under Section 31 of the Local Government and finance Act. Where appropriate holding

copies of documents relating to Local Growth Fund and other funding sources received from Government;

- Supports the Board and Programme Sub-Group in making decisions on project funding (for example if subject to legal challenge);
- ensuring that the arrangements for local audit of funding allocated by the company is robust and meets the standards equivalent to those in place for local authority spend.

4.7 The Director of Finance, who is the Section 151 officer¹, attends all Board and Finance and Audit Committee Meetings and provides advice and challenge. They are therefore fully involved in the decision-making process and can be confident we are acting in accordance with relevant laws and regulations. Supporting this, we and OCC as accountable Body agree financial monitoring on a regular basis and financial and operational monitoring is discussed at each Board meeting.

4.8 Whilst highly unlikely, should OCC as the accountable body feel that it was being asked to undertake a course of action that fell outside Financial Regulations, there are dispute resolution procedures outlined in the MoU to resolve the matter. As accountable body, OCC is ultimately responsible for the expenditure relating to the funding for the LEP received under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 and would be in position to prevent what it considered to be inappropriate or unapproved commitment or expenditure. Any dispute would be resolved between the Council's Section 151 officer and the company Chief Executive initially, with escalation to OCC Cabinet and the LEP Board if the issue could not be resolved.

4.9 Funds related to the Enterprise Zones 1 and 2 are collected and administered by Vale of White Horse District Council. They are the collection authority for business rates and deploy/transfer these funds under direction from our Board. This relationship is also governed by an MoU, to which OCC as our accountable body is also a signatory. This sets out the obligations and responsibilities of each party. In practice the relationship between OxLEP and Vale is one of revenue collection, which is monitored by OCC and OxLEP. The accountable body working relationships are reviewed regularly to ensure they are effective.

5. Conflicts of Interest

5.1 We actively recruit people to our Boards and Committees who have an interest in developing the Oxfordshire economy. The skills and experience these individuals bring is invaluable in helping shape decision making and developing the projects and schemes that will help us achieve our stated vision.

¹ S151 of the 1972 Local Government Act requires local authorities to secure that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of its financial affairs.

- 5.2 Individual Non-Executive Director and staff interests are declared, annually with declarations and conflicts managed at each board meeting that ensures no inappropriate influence is exercised or benefit to individuals or organisations results. In line with “best practice” all Board Directors on appointment are required to declare any interests they have. This information is used to make sure those individuals are not placed in compromising situations. At the same time all decision makers are made aware of the need to declare interests when they arise and remove themselves from situations where they could be deemed to have a conflict of interest.
- 5.3 Registers of interests for all Board [Directors](#), the Corporate Management Team and Accountable Body Section 151 Officers are held, reviewed and updated. All declarations are posted on our website and hard copies with ink signatures are available to review in the Company offices.

6 Gifts and Hospitality

- 6.1 We maintain a policy on the accepting and offering of gifts and hospitality which covers our staff. The Code of Conduct sets out the rules and procedures for Board directors and offers of gifts and hospitality. All offers of gifts and hospitality are recorded and are available for scrutiny by our internal and external auditors should they wish. Guidance is given to all staff on the appropriateness of accepting or declining gifts and the need to do so in a transparent manner.

Our gifts and hospitality register can be found [here](#).

7 Freedom of Information

- 7.1 As a Company Ltd by Guarantee we are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2005 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. However, we would always seek to make information available wherever possible. In addition, as the accountable body OCC records most transactions on behalf of the LEP. These are subject to FOI rules and regulations and are covered through the Memorandum of Understanding.

8 Complaints

- 8.1 We take all [complaints](#) very seriously and we have a published procedure on our website for dealing with complaints from stakeholders or other interested parties. Depending on the nature of the complaint we may either involve the accountable body in addressing the complaint or inform them of the outcome to ensure they are aware of the issue and any learning points we have taken on board.

9 GDPR

We are committed to ensuring the security and protection of the personal information that we process, and to provide a compliant and consistent approach to data protection. We have always had a robust and effective data protection program in place which complies with existing law and abides by the

data protection principles. However, we recognise our obligations in updating and expanding this program to meet the demands of the GDPR.

We are dedicated to safeguarding the personal information held and in developing a data protection regime that is effective, fit for purpose and demonstrates an understanding of and appreciation for the Regulation.

Our GDPR (privacy policy) can be found [here](#).

10 Anti-fraud and corruption/anti-bribery

- 10.1 Dealing with public money requires the highest levels of financial probity and accountability. We maintain a robust system of financial control, monitoring and reporting to ensure transactions are transparent and scrutinised.
- 10.2 However, we would always encourage staff who have concerns over our financial arrangements to raise those concerns, so we can be sure those systems are working effectively.
- 10.3 All suspected frauds, irregularities or financial improprieties should be reported to our Chair, the details for which are included in the [statement](#), who also Chairs our Finance and Audit Committee. He will then request OCC undertake an initial investigation. On conclusion of their work the findings will be reported back to the Finance and Audit Committee who will take a judgement on what action to take.

11 Whistle-blowing

- 11.1 As well as the routes outlined above in terms of registering complaints and concerns, we maintain a [Whistle Blowing](#) framework. Where staff, stakeholders or suppliers have concerns they are able to report those confidentially without fear of repercussions through this policy.

12 Audit and Accounts

- 12.1 Due to the nature of the work we undertake, the majority of the transactions relating to project work are carried out by OCC as our accountable body. Spend incurred by OCC and funds drawn down are included in their annual statement of accounts, which for 2017/18 are required to be published by 31 May 2018, and key financial systems are subject to annual internal audit by the Council. Any findings which are relevant to our transactions will be reported back to our Finance and Audit Committee. The financial statements are audited by the Council's external auditors, currently Ernst and Young LLP, and are publicly available through the OCC website.
- 12.2 Those transactions passing through the company directly are set out in the company's annual accounts which are examined by our external auditors and filed with Companies House as well as being available on our website. During the year we ran a competitive tendering exercise for the provision of external audit services to the organisation. Following this exercise, we appointed

Richardsons as our auditors and are working with them to ensure an efficient and effective audit process in accordance with companies house requirements.

- 12.3 We are working with our auditors, with the accountable body and with the accountable bodies external auditors to ensure all transactions are accurately reflected and that our true activities are clear to stakeholders.
- 12.4 In addition to the audits of financial information and governance arrangements, many of the projects we manage are subject to external scrutiny by the funding bodies themselves. These project audits are an invaluable tool for designing future projects, to ensure lessons learned are taken on board by the organisation.

13 Risk Management

- 13.1 All the activities of company are affected by risk to a greater or lesser degree, and it is the responsibility of the Board to ensure those risks are managed effectively.
- 13.2 The organisation has drawn up a risk management policy and captures the risks at a strategic, operational and programme level in a risk register.
- 13.3 Whilst ultimately the Board is responsible for the management of risk, the Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring the risk management process operates effectively. They make sure operational risks are reviewed on a regular basis by the Corporate Management Team and the strategic risks are reviewed by the Finance and Audit Committee. Any significant operational or strategic risks would be highlighted to the Board to ensure they remain fully informed.

14 Joint Working

- 14.1 Wherever possible we seek to work with other LEPs to reduce duplication while maximising impact and use of resources. As well as being active contributors to the LEP network, sharing of Best Practice, we are part of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc partnership and various sector based/thematic partnerships such as 'The Oxfordshire Transformative Technologies Alliance SIA' alongside five other LEPs which focussed on 4 large scale, disruptive technologies, for which the UK has great need and world class strength.
- 14.2 Similarly, we work closely with our neighbouring LEPs in the Greater Thames Valley area, which comprise the Thames Valley Berkshire, Enterprise M3, Buckinghamshire Thames Valley and Solent LEPs to advance an agenda of mutual interest and develop the area in terms of economic contribution to the UK.
- 14.3 We are also involved in Motorsport Valley UK along with the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley, Coventry and Warwickshire, Leicester and Leicestershire and the South-East Midlands LEPs to promote investment and development of the automotive industry in the regions.

- 14.4 More broadly we are actively leading local authority and key stakeholders, locally, regionally and nationally in the development of our Local Industrial Strategy over the course of the next twelve months.

15 Social Value

15.1 Defining Social Value

15.1.1 The Social Value Guide defines Social Value as “*the additional benefit to the community from a commissioning/procurement process over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes*”. Much of this is being driven by the Public Services (Social Value) Act, which came into force on 31st January 2013 and requires those who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits.

15.1.2 We embrace opportunities that arise under the Social Value Act, and through procurement processes, and will work with partners and key stakeholders to promote and develop this across the county. However, we have developed strategies that go far beyond its compliance obligations to maximise its investment funding and activities to create Social Value. It takes a leading role across the county, working innovatively with key partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries to open up and create additional Social Value, through environmental, employment, health and wellbeing benefits and improvements.

15.2 Strategic approach

15.2.1 Our Vision, originally set out in our Strategic Economic Plan and now refreshed in Local Industrial Strategy sees Oxfordshire as a vibrant, sustainable, inclusive, world leading economy, driven by innovation, enterprise and research excellence. Threaded through each of these elements are opportunities to create and add Social Value. As an example, one of the ten themes within the Innovation Strategy is *Innovation for Social Good*. This focuses on building strength in social enterprise by linking social innovators and encouraging sustainable businesses for social good. Our Strategic Environmental Economic Investment Plan includes innovative and collaborative initiatives such as FEW4allOX, which will help put environmental innovation at the heart of economic growth. We have retained the services of a dedicated resource to lead our social value work locally and nationally with regular updates to Board. We are also keen to maximise the social value impacts from the emerging UK Shared Prosperity fund as further details emerge.

15.3 Leading and collaborating with local partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries

15.3.1 We are a strong partnership of leaders and organisations from all sectors in Oxfordshire driving innovation and growth. It is well-positioned and well

connected to lead and influence adding Social Value for improved social impact and environmental conditions. As an example, we work closely with Oxfordshire Social Entrepreneurship Partnership www.osep.org.uk, which supports and promotes Social Enterprise across the county. Working with OSEP and other key stakeholders we helped to establish Oxfordshire as the first Social Enterprise County under the Social Enterprise UK “Place” programme.

15.4 Collaboration outside the county

15.4.1 Through the Social Enterprise Place programme, strong national networks and relationships with central government, we and our key partners will continue to work with people, organisations and regions pioneering this theme elsewhere around the country and even internationally. For example, local support of national campaigns like Social Enterprise UK’s [Buy Social campaign](#)

15.5 Maximising Social Value to address key priorities

15.5.1 We have developed strategies to address key priorities in relation to:

Place Making

Provide the quality environment and choice of homes needed to support growth and capitalise upon the exceptional quality of life, vibrant economy and the dynamic urban and rural communities of our county.

Productivity

Encourage innovation led growth, underpinned by Oxfordshire’s strengths in University research and development, business collaboration and supply chain potential.

- Oxfordshire Business Support has a dedicated “Network Navigator” to support and encourage setting up and growth of Social Enterprise and opportunities for Social Innovation amongst mainstream business, which fits with central government initiatives including the review of [mission-led businesses](#)

To support this it is essential we attract specialist and flexible skills at all levels, across all sectors, as required by our businesses, with full, inclusive employment and fulfilling jobs. We demonstrate this through:

- Community Employment Plans (CEPs) - Supporting people to access job opportunities arising from new development.
- Careers Enterprise Company Facilitating the brokerage of expertise and experience from business into education across Oxfordshire.
- Oxfordshire Apprenticeships programme - Wide-ranging engagement with Oxfordshire schools and employers across all sectors.

Connectivity

Allow people to move freely, connect easily and provide the services, environment and facilities needed by a dynamic, growing and dispersed economy.

16 Transparent Decision Making and Programme Sub Group

- 16.1 Our Programme Sub-Group, chaired by a Board Director has oversight and management of Oxfordshire's Local Growth Fund programmes, operating to a high level of transparency, ensuring the active involvement of local and regional representation including our accountable body.
- 16.2 In recognition of the increased scale of programme responsibility and operational delivery, we have strengthened our Programme Sub-Group oversight with responsibility for reviewing progress, programme development and consideration of project change requests in support of project delivery. To maximise the effectiveness of the Sub-Group we have delegated programme change responsibility within agreed levels (<£1m) to the Group where these changes are within existing approved project budgets. The group is supported by the Executive Team, they report quarterly on progress and seek the boards agreement to project change requests or variations outside of these delegation limits.
- 16.3 Projects are assessed using a best practice prioritisation framework and recommendations are made to our Board for approval. The Board are then responsible for approving the Local Growth Fund Programme. We ensure that anyone involved in designing or promoting a project or programme is not involved in the groups with responsibility for assessing or recommending those projects for approval.
- 16.4 We openly advertise funding opportunities through our website. Initially this will be in the form of an expression of interest, then those assessed to meet the call criteria will be invited to produce a more formal business case. This includes core specification, selection criteria, and selection processes.

17 Project Prioritisation

- 17.1 Our Programme Sub Group oversees a robust project assessment process for all projects funded through our programmes based on government's recommended best practice guidance on appraisal and evaluation.
- 17.2 The group uses a best practice prioritisation framework to assess a range of project types, reflecting the breadth of Oxfordshire ambition aligned to the Local Industrial Strategy and Strategic Economic Plan themes. This framework has been aligned with HM Treasury Green Book and allows us to prioritise projects on the basis of the strategic fit, deliverability, value for money, and impact.
- 17.3 These criteria have been developed with reference to recommended Best Practice in economic appraisal outlined in the Department for Communities and Local Government appraisal guide. The framework provides a transparent peer

review process for assessing projects, and interrogating projected outputs, viability and deliverability. The Programme Sub Group will ensure that, as a minimum, strategic fit, value for money, deliverability, environmental and social/distributional impact should always be among the factors taken into consideration.

- 17.4 For transport projects we utilise the DfT's Best Practice Guidance, including modelling, appraisal and social and distributional impacts of projects as well as determining their value for money.
- 17.5 Value for money is key to all the actions, both in its day to day operations and procurement and in the projects, it delivers. Taking advice from staff and sub-groups, the Chief Executive is responsible for ensuring value for money (vfm), this will be assessed against the contribution the project makes to strategic priorities for business growth, job creation and housing development.
- 17.6 In all cases the assessment of the business case will be undertaken by appropriately skilled personnel, drawing on external expertise as required. The Chair of the Programme sub-group is ultimately responsible for ensuring all business cases have been subject to adequate scrutiny before recommendations are made to the Board.
- 17.7 As part of its work the Programme Sub Group will require the project sponsor to secure match funding from other sources to contribute to the overall investment in the project. This is to ensure that the burden of economic development does not fall solely on the public purse and that all beneficiaries contribute towards Oxfordshire's economic growth.

18 Project Management and Delivery

- 18.1 We follow "Best Practice" programme and project management guidance. Stakeholders, professional advice and the requirements for each project will differ project by project but the principle structure remains consistent.
- 18.2 Our Programme Sub-Group will;
- ensure that due diligence is completed and any recommendations are actioned prior to completing the funding agreement;
 - ensure that an independent state aid assessment is completed and any recommendations are followed up.
 - ensure a signed funding agreement is in place with each delivery partner;
 - ensure a memorandum of understanding is in place where the delivery partner is the accountable body;
 - ensure the information we require for monitoring and reporting is communicated to, and agreed by, delivery partners;
 - ensure changes to projects, noting delegation limits, are properly managed and reported to the Programme Sub Group and Board respectively;
 - ensure delivery partners have correct systems and capability to deliver the project;

- ensure all procedures and controls are followed and are up-to-date;
 - monitor the contract delivery on an on-going regular basis;
 - work with the delivery partner on any arising issues that may hinder progress;
 - ensure the correct levels of controls and governance are apparent throughout the project;
 - ensure the delivery partner delivers against contract, and where necessary instruct for enforcement of defaults on contracts;
 - ensure the arrangements in the event of non-delivery or mismanagement set out in the funding agreements or MoU are complied with;
 - ensure regular monitoring and updates on all programmes for their lifetime; covering risks and issues and ensure compliance with the Financial Regulations of the Accountable Body;
 - Provide regular reports on the ongoing delivery of regional projects highlighting any risks, and outputs achieved through its “RAG²” rated delivery plan reporting procedure;
 - Ensure a robust audit trail to demonstrate compliance.
 - Ensure that delivery partners meet the government branding guidelines.
- 18.3 On a quarterly basis we report back to central government, the programme sub-group, and board on the progress we are making, this includes the LGF data capture spreadsheet. We also report progress through the Annual Performance Review process.
- 18.4 We will seek to minimise programme risk in all our working arrangements. All funded projects are required to maintain a Risk Register specific to the project. Programme risk will receive more intensive management by the Programme Manager where larger budgets and a greater number of, or complexity of, schemes exist.
- 18.5 We will not release funding until a claim is made in accordance with the funding agreement requirements, signed off by the Project lead, and Company Accountant/Director of Corporate services and paid in arrears.
- 18.6 The Programme Manager acts as the key point of contact for any queries by the Sub Group and Board Members between meetings and will be made available to all funded projects and will be publicised on the website.

19 Output and Outcome evaluation

- 19.1 All our projects deliver outputs and outcomes. Whilst these terms are often used interchangeably, they are not the same thing. Outputs are those results that are achieved immediately as a result of the project; for example, where a college centre has been built, the outputs would be the building itself and any staff employed for it. Outcomes are those results that are achieved in the mid-term; in this example this could be number of new learners assisted, who will arrive as a result of the project's completion, but this will take longer to quantify.

² Red, Amber, Green. OxLEP also uses Blue to distinguish those projects fully complete.

- 19.2 Expected outputs and outcomes are included in the funding agreement for each project, as are the monitoring requirements for project managers and delivery partners.
- 19.3 Quarterly returns are completed by each project manager and sent to our Programme Manager for review and inclusion in relevant reporting, such as LEP Delivery Plan for the Programme Sub Group, OxLEP Board and Central Government as well as LGF data capture spreadsheet reporting for Central Government. This allows us to capture outputs and outcomes and track against the targets we have set.
- 19.4 For Local Growth Fund and City Deal projects following completion of a project an evaluation will be completed. We are currently working with other LEPs and Central Government representatives to create an agreed standard procedure for project and programme evaluation.

20 Website

- 20.1 Our website is the key vehicle for communicating the progress and delivery of our programmes. Details of all the projects approved under LGF schemes, their budgets and intended outcomes are there for stakeholders to review along with the Board, committee and sub-group agendas and minutes setting out the decision-making process. Details contained on the website to include other key documents along with a version of the Operating Plan showing progress to date against existing projects. Given that some of this information is commercially sensitive we are exploring ways of making as much information available to the public while protecting the integrity of the projects.
- 20.2 The website also links through to our partner organisations who hold their own information on the work they are doing with us.
- 20.3 We are currently in the process of strengthening our communications resources, which will allow for more proactive communication of our activities to help stakeholders stay informed.

21 Engagement

- 21.1 Engagement with stakeholders is fundamental to the work we undertake. We have previously used a variety of channels, such as the work of the Growth Board, sub-groups, public consultations and regular engagement with local authority colleagues and Business Representative Organisations. There is always more we can do and we will be making more effective use of social media channels to better engage with those who have meaningful contributions.

Our Communications plan can be [found here](#)

22 Further developments

- 22.1 We are always seeking to improve how we operate and interact with our stakeholders, and we are already looking to what we can do better in 2019/2020. We intend to move to Board meetings being held in public during the year, potentially from September 2019.
- 22.2 Considerable effort has gone into redeveloping our website and ensuring it acts as an effective portal into our work. We will continue to refine the website, adding more functionality and providing easier access to the services we offer.