



In February 2018, OxLEP submitted its assurance framework and I was able to confirm that compliance with revised standards in all but one instance. The Growth Deal projects were detailed on the OxLEP website; however, progress on the delivery of these projects was not published. Project progress was reported to the Executive Board regularly, however, whilst the Agenda and Minutes from meetings were available on the website, the project level Operating Plan was not. OxLEP set a target date of June for publishing the Operating Plan update reports on the web site and this was achieved by this date.

In March, Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) reported on an Internal Audit of OxLEP. The audit activity focused on governance, financial management and procedures as well as responsibilities of the accountable body. The overall conclusion on the system of internal control was rated amber. Management actions were identified to address the weaknesses that spanned both OxLEP and OCC and this report was presented to both the Finance & Audit Committee of OxLEP and as part of the Annual Internal Audit report to OCC's Audit & Governance Committee. The majority of the actions have now been implemented with two to be completed before the end of the financial year.

One of the management actions identified was to revise the MoU to reflect current arrangements, roles and responsibilities of OxLEP and OCC ensuring the errors and omissions highlighted by the Audit within the current MoU are corrected within the revised agreement. This was updated and agreed by the Finance & Audit Committee in August. Executive Board approval will be in March 2018, once the charging schedule has been completed by OCC.

I have good and close working relationships with the Chief Executive of OxLEP and meet monthly. I attend the Executive Board meetings, providing regular financial updates and can comment on any of the items presented. In addition, I attend the Finance & Audit Committee, a sub-committee of the Board and recently participated in the selection and recommendation for the provision of audit services including an annual assessment of internal control processes as well as final accounts production.

In June, to strengthen governance, a Programme Board was established which includes an officer from the accountable body. This Board will have oversight of, and will recommend, future programmes to the LEP Board for approval. It will oversee and monitor all signed off projects and programmes and these will all be included in the LEP Operating Plan. This Board is a welcome addition to the governance framework.

Earlier this month, the Executive Board considered and approved the recommendations arising from a report on the Mary Ney review. This includes a section from me on the issues I saw arising from the review as a S151 officer.

A Board away-day is planned in December 2018 that will consider issues around governance and the operation of the Board, Committees and sub-groups. I have been asked to provide comments for consideration and welcome the commitment to governance issues this demonstrates.