

## HotSW Annual Assurance Statement 2020-21

Accountability and decision making has continued to work well with close, active and constructive working with our Section 151 officer and accountable body (Somerset County Council), for example providing training to existing and new Board members on managing conflicts of interest. Accountable body representatives have continued to attend our Board, Strategic Investment Panel and Finance and Resources meetings where decisions on investments and funds are taken. In 2020 the LEP completed the transfer of the Growing Places Fund to Somerset County Council meaning we now have one accountable body.

The local Assurance Framework was reviewed and updated in 2020 with changes made to aid navigation. The refreshed framework was approved by Finance & Resources committee and is published on the website.

In the summer Somerset undertook an audit of the LEP's compliance with the assurance framework (copy of report provided). The report stated "There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited." 10 actions were identified, of which 9 were of the lowest priority and all 10 are either completed or on track for completion by February.

In line with corporate best practice the LEP undertook a Board effectiveness review mid-2020 which has resulted in several improvements in the way the Board and Board members operate. This included revision of the Nominations Committee which oversaw a successful recruitment campaign resulting in four new members joining the Board in January 2021. The effectiveness review will be repeated in 2021.

The local authority-led scrutiny function has continued to provide democratic oversight of LEP activity and steps have been taken with the Scrutiny chair to strengthen this further in 2020.

The LEP's AGM was in September and due to the pandemic was held on-line with coverage highlighted on the website. In line with previous years, although as a dormant CIS the LEP submits zero balance accounts to Companies House, an overview of the LEP's operating costs formed part of the annual report.

We continue to work closely with our Local Authority partners and remain part of the Joint Committee meetings and the LEP has continued to lead and shape the Great SW partnership with Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly and Dorset.

Signed: KARL TUCKER  
Name: Karl Tucker  
Position: Chair  
Date: 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Signed: DAVID RALPH  
Name: David Ralph  
Position: Chief Executive  
Date: 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Creating opportunities in Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay

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