



Annex B: Section 151/73/127 Assurance Statement

The Section 151/73/127 Officer should here provide a report to the Annual Performance Review on their work for the LEP over the last twelve months, and their opinion, with a specific requirement to identify any issues of concern, on governance and transparency. The report should focus on any issues raised in Annex A: Annual Performance Review Preparation. This report should be sent to the Assurance Team via localgrowthassurance@levellingup.gov.uk copying the DHLUC/DBT Area Lead by **29 February 2024. (max 500 words)**

There are no financial, transparency or governance concerns that I need to raise regarding the operation of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

To the best of my knowledge, the LEP continues to operate within its local Assurance and Accountability Framework, previously agreed by all upper tier authorities. Somerset Council has an experienced, qualified accountant as a voting member on the Operations and Investment Committee, ensuring compliance with the Framework.

Key controls remain in place. As Accountable Body, we retain the final decision on whether projects go forward and can veto individual business cases. Neither of these powers have needed to be exercised.

OIC is led by a strong chair and supported by experienced Board members who provide robust conversation at these meetings, which is evident from the minutes and decision making.

In line with Government guidance LEP functions will be transferred into the 4 Upper Tier Local Authorities of Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council, Somerset Council and Torbay Council. This will take place as soon as practicable after 31 March 2024.

Key activity / achievements during 2023

- Growth Deal projects have continued throughout 2023 using freedoms and flexibilities, as profiled.
- Robust challenge and review of the use of Growth Deal monies set aside. Final projects are now being formally agreed and delivery is underway.
- Getting Building projects finished spending throughout 2023, as profiled.
- Regularly reviewing and questioning with OIC on the outputs profiling and financial forecasts.
- Managing through OIC the operation budgets with monthly review with increased scrutiny and questioning.
- Creation of LEP transition plan and endorsement by each Local Authority and LEP.

Governance

- Somerset Council remains the single accountable body.
- No governance or transparency issues to report.

J. C. Vaughan

Signed:

Name: Jason Vaughan

Position: Executive Director – Resources & Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer)

Date: 28 February 2024