

## Annex B: Section 151/73 Assurance Statement

The Section 151/73 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. In particular, you should focus on any particular issues raised in Annex A Annual Performance Review Preparation. This should be sent to [localgrowthassurance@communities.gov.uk](mailto:localgrowthassurance@communities.gov.uk) copying the Cities and Local Growth Unit Area Lead by **16 December 2019. (max 500 words)**

As the accountable body for the Marches LEP, Shropshire Council provides support to the Marches LEP including the provision of a Treasurer role by the Section 151 Officer.

The s151 Officer and relevant finance team staff meet formally with the LEP team on a bi-monthly basis to ensure all financial and governance issues are discussed and reviewed in a timely manner. The s151 Officer also attends each Performance Risk and Monitoring Committee to present papers, provide updates and deal with any queries relating to finance or governance within the remit set out in the Accountability and Assurance Framework. The s151 Officer attends Board meetings as requested; as a minimum to respond to specific requirements such as presentation of the annual accounts or as requested by the Chair.

The 2018/19 Statement of Accounts for the Marches LEP were drawn up by the finance team and presented to the LEP Board in July 2019. The accounts provide a view of the overall financial position of the LEP and continuous improvements to the format and usability of the accounts have been made following reviews and feedback from the Marches LEP Board Members each year since they were first produced for 2015/16.

The role of the s151 officer within the LEP is now fully embedded. Financial and Risk implications of projects and actions taken forward by the LEP are considered at all stages by the Section 151 Officer and, where necessary and appropriate, reflected in reports through to the LEP Board. The Board have shown themselves to be knowledgeable and willing to challenge, as well as being largely aware and supportive of the Section 151 officer role and of wider governance arrangements.

The Section 151 Officers or their representatives (for each of the local authorities within the LEP) are regular attendees of the LEP Board and/or PRMC meetings and informal sounding out of issues and support can be obtained at an early stage as a result.

Shropshire Council, as accountable body for the Marches LEP, makes use of the internal audit service to identify an audit plan incorporating the LEP based on a risk assessment and discussion with the LEP Team and s151 Officer. In 2018/19 a limited assurance was given because limited progress was evidenced in implementing previous audit recommendations from 2017/18, including procedures to ensure that growth deal funding is correctly administered. The report recognised that a considerable amount of work had been undertaken to address any

weaknesses around project management. The revised process is considered sound but has yet to be fully implemented across all growth deals. Once implemented and embedded, this should impact positively on the assurance level.

Final arrangements and implications for the LEP becoming a company limited by guarantee are yet to be completed and the s151 Officer is involved at all stages of discussions.

Despite the difficulties in progressing some projects and low levels of spend evidenced in the current financial year, there were no major governance issues relating to the LEP, or raised in Appendix A of this document, that require further identification or reference here.

**Section 151/73 Sign-off:**

Signed:

Name: James Walton

Position: Director of Finance, Governance and Assurance (s151 Officer), Shropshire Council (Treasurer Marches LEP)

Date 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019