

Annex B: Section 151/73 Assurance Statement

The Section 151/73 Officer should here provide a report to the Annual Conversation 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 issued raised in Annex A. **(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. This includes support from a dedicated member of staff within the finance team, plus support from other senior finance officers as defined and approved by the s151 Officer. Support includes financial monitoring of LEP funding and spending including individual schemes, development of policies and procedures for the award of and monitoring of funding allocated and advice on the governance and administration of public funds.

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 2017/18 Statement of Accounts for the Marches LEP were drawn up by the finance team and presented to the LEP Board in July. 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 Section 151 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 understanding and supportive of the Section 151 officer role and 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 2016/17 a positive assurance was given which included the following areas:

- Effective governance arrangements are in place for the LEP
- New and existing income streams are maximised

- The LEP employs clear eligibility criteria for the utilisation and allocation of funding streams.

More recent audit reviews have been limited in their assurance in the main due to the time and resource available to follow up on previous recommendations and actions.

There were no major 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: Head of Finance, Governance and Assurance (s151 Officer), Shropshire Council (Treasurer Marches LEP)

Date 02.01.19