



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 MEP 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 josh.walker@beis.gov.uk by **27 January 2023**.
(max 500 words)

SCC continues to work closely with the Midlands Engine team and the working relationship is now well established.

A weekly meeting is held between SCC finance staff and ME staff to ensure the latest financial position is agreed and understood, and to review upcoming financial or other governance issues. The AB provides the ME with a budget monitoring position at the end of each month. The SCC AB Lead has a monthly meeting with the Senior Executive Officer of the ME and attends the Executive Board and Operating Board.

The ME continues to follow SCC financial governance processes, procurement regulations and HR policies.

SCC HR team have provided an increased level of support during the year, dealing with some challenging issues, which are now largely resolved, although work continues on the on-going ME structure.

No major issues of concern have been identified with the current governance processes. However, a full review of all documentation is currently in process following the recent changes to the Executive Board and Operating Board, and the imminent introduction of a Finance, Audit and Risk Board, which will be a really positive step forward in terms of strengthening the current ME governance processes.

The ME boards receive financial updates as part of the Executive Director governance reports, and also includes an update on the activity and progress against each individual DLUHC grant milestone. The latest report shows positive progress against each of the 2022/23 grant milestones. It should be noted that the decision to provide a multi-year settlement has provided the ME with the financial stability that allows them to plan further forward, which is demonstrated by the Business Plan 2023-2026, which is currently being finalised. The plan will provide the framework for the ME on how it will operate moving forward, how it can add value to the work of partners, where its efforts are best focussed, and confirm its role through convening, advocating and evidencing.

It is forecast that the £1.5m DLUHC grant will be fully spent at year end. The AB is also in the process of commencing work with the Executive Team to establish a robust budget for the next financial year. A key part of this is



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

obviously reflecting in the detailed budget the outcomes of the business planning work.

Partnership “cash” contributions continue to be an issue for the ME, however it is positive to note that the overall level of match funding, largely relating to staff time of partners continues to be significant.

As stated above the relationship between the AB and ME is positive, with close working across the key areas of finance, HR and procurement. No specific issues of concern in relation to the management of the financial affairs of the ME have been identified to date and the introduction of the finance, audit and risk board will further strengthen the financial governance of the partnership.

Signed: 

Name: Simon Ablewhite

Position: Assistant County Treasurer (Deputy 151), Staffordshire County Council

Date: 26th January 2023