



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 Midlands Engine Partnership 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 Georgia.elms@businessandtrade.gov.uk by 28th February 2024. (max 500 words)

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

Weekly meetings are 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 Finance, Audit and Risk Board.

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

SCC HR team continue to provide an increased level of support as work has progressed on the ME structure.

No major issues of concern have been identified with the current governance processes which following a full review are now firmly embedded; a key change being the introduction of the Finance, Audit and Risk Board.

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 2023/24 grant milestones.

An area of concern for the AB is the ongoing financial viability of the ME as the ME enters the final year of a multi-year settlement. The lack of certainty for ongoing funding prevents the ME to plan further forward.

It is forecast that the £1.5m DLUHC grant will be fully spent at year end. The AB has also supported the Executive Team to establish a robust budget for the next financial year. A key part of this is obviously reflecting in the detailed budget the outcomes of the business planning work.



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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.

Finally, SCC internal audit have concluded their annual review of the ME and confirmed substantial assurance.

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: Peter Shakespear

Position: Assistant Director of Finance (Deputy 151), Staffordshire County Council

Date: 28/02/2024