

Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership

Section 151 Assurance Statement

February 2024



## 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](mailto:localgrowthassurance@levellingup.gov.uk) copying the DHLUC/DBT Area Lead by **28 February 2024. (max 500 words)**

Dorset Council is the Accountable Body (AB) for Dorset LEP and manages the accounting activities of Dorset LEP funding.

I attend Dorset LEP Board Meetings in my role as Section 151 Officer and contribute to relevant discussions accordingly, particularly around finance. I am also a member of the Finance, Audit & Corporate Risk Committee and have met with the Dorset LEP Interim Director (and subsequently the Executive Director) on a regular basis.

Senior staff from Dorset LEP and Dorset Council have met at least monthly and as a result financial reporting to the Board is detailed and clear. The implementation of an enhanced governance structure at Dorset LEP adds additional levels of assurance and transparency regarding decision making. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee, which includes representatives from both Local Authorities as well as independent members, is an example of this.

No Grants were awarded by the LEP or any new GPF loans made in 2023-24. The AB was involved in the value for money assessments for all previous funding under Growth Deal, Getting Building Fund and the Growing Places Fund (GPF), receiving all project business cases and independent appraisals, undertaking their review and scrutiny, including the provision of a value for money statement prior to submission to the Dorset LEP Board for an official decision. This process offered the AB the opportunity to comment in writing on all funding decisions and to have a view on the specific recommendations relating to the project funding and associated evidence and is fully in line with the Local Assurance Framework.

Following the award of funding, the AB, alongside the Dorset LEP Programme Managers, reviewed all drawdown claims ensuring they are correct and admissible so that payments can be made. Risk based sample checks were undertaken on all project grant claims and sign off of payments are then subject to a three-stage authorisation process to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the grant before payments are issued. For GPF, prior to any funds being released, the loan



securities and loan agreement are formally signed off by Dorset Council's legal department. The Accountable Body ensures that interest payments and capital repayments are invoiced and paid within two weeks.

The AB is also involved in the receipt of funding for all programme funding and as such claims are checked in accordance with the grant condition where applicable.

Having considered all the relevant information, in my role as the Section 151 Officer, I am of the opinion that the financial affairs of the Dorset LEP are being properly administered and that the Dorset LEP Board has a proper oversight of the financial resources available to it.

Signed:



Name: Aidan Dunn

Position: Executive Director Corporate Development (S151 Officer)

Date: 29 February 2024