



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 copying the DHLUC/DBT Area Lead by **29 February 2024. (max 500 words)**

The key responsibilities of the S73 officer have continued to be discharged by myself and my team, including attendance at Business Board (BB) meetings, comment and approval of all papers prior to presentation to the BB, and the overall system of governance and controls across the combined Constitution and Local Assurance Framework.

In the 22-23 assurance statement there was reference to the concerns raised by the CPCA's external auditor and highlighted that one of the areas of concern raised impacted on the LEP – specifically the lack of executive level support to the Business Board.

In response to the concerns raised by the auditors the CPCA instigated an improvement plan. A key element of this was the permanent recruitment of executives and, as of today's date all executive roles in the Combined Authority are occupied by permanent staff, including the Executive Director for Economy and Growth who acts as the chief officer for the Business Board.

This improvement has been recognised in the on-statutory Best Value Notice issued by DLUCH in February 2024 which recognised significant progress and no longer identified executive capacity as an area of concern.

The Business Board has seen significant turnover within the last year, with 5 new Members being appointed in December, and a further 4 posts being recruited to in February 2024 however historic knowledge is still present in longer standing members, including the Chair.

The Business Board has continued to evolve its role within the Combined Authority over the last year as LEPs nationally are incorporated into Local Authorities. As part of this the Business Board's role is being expanded to ensure there is a strong business voice considered in all significant decisions the Combined Authority faces. This is most clearly demonstrated by the Business Board appointing representatives to sit on all the Combined Authority's thematic committees to feed into deliberations, and report back to the Business Board.



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Department for
Business & Trade

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Bell'.

Name: Nick Bell

Position: Executive Director of Resource and Performance

Date: 27th February 2024