

East Sussex County Council Local Growth Assurance Framework

Version number: 1.0

Publication date:

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the East Sussex Local Growth Assurance Framework

The Government's 2022 Levelling Up White Paper set out a commitment to extend devolution across England, empower local leaders and integrate Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) functions into local democratic institutions. In March 2023, Government announced that it was "minded to" discontinue funding for LEPs from April 2024 onwards. In light of this, on 7 July 2023 the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) Strategic Board made the decision to close operations. On 4 August 2023, Government confirmed that it would not continue to fund the national network of LEPs from 2024/25, stating that their functions should be integrated into Upper Tier Local Authorities (UTLAs).

The Government's decision provides a range of opportunities for the County Council and its stakeholder partners across East Sussex to have more intervention in setting strategic priorities and accelerating programmes of activity to support local economic growth. The County Council is ideally placed to take on former LEP responsibilities owing to a very successful track record in developing, delivering and evaluating impactful economic growth initiatives in the county with a proven ability to convene partners and stakeholders to work together for the benefit of local businesses and residents. The LEP transition provides the County Council the opportunity to build on the existing governance, management and oversight of the local growth capital programme, continue to enable its business-led strategic advisory economic growth board for the county, and take on the role of local Accountable Body for future management and monitoring of capital grant and loan programmes as required. This has been incorporated within the LEP Transition Agreement between all upper tier authorities.

In conjunction with SELEP's integration planning, the County Council has developed this new Local Growth Assurance Framework to provide local scrutiny, checks, balances and accountability to the public and to the UK Government.

1.2 How the East Sussex Local Growth Assurance Framework should be used

This document has been broken down into the following parts:

- The introduction, Section 1, provides background and context to the East Sussex Local Growth Assurance Framework and covers how the framework should be implemented.
- Section 2 explains the various local assurance provisions, including Accountable Body working arrangements, governance structures, details of accountability, engagement, transparency, strategic alignment, value for money, risk management, best practice, equality and diversity and improving performance.
- Section 3 sets out in more detail all of the specific processes and procedures required under the assurance framework.

1.3 Alignment with National Policy

The East Sussex Local Growth Assurance Framework (this Assurance Framework) is aligned to the Government's [guidance](#) on LEP integration published in August 2023, the further complementary [guidance](#) published in December 2023 and the Local Economic Development Funding: Assurance Framework issued by MHCLG in October 2024.

These include the adoption, or continuation, of the following functions formerly undertaken by SELEP:

- Business representation;
- Strategic economic planning;
- The delivery of government programmes (where directed).

Furthermore, while the County Council considers its options in pursuing a Devolution Deal, as a matter of best practice this Assurance Framework also adheres to the principles of the [English Devolution Accountability Framework \(EDAF\)](#).

The accountability arrangements described in this Assurance Framework aim to act as a safeguard to ensure ethical behaviour, strong performance and good value for money for the local taxpayer by placing a focus on transparency and scrutiny.

The checks and balance in place are to ensure that standards in public life are maintained, value for money is delivered, and the voice of business has the opportunity to influence decision making. This Framework demonstrates robust assurance, project appraisal and value for money processes.

This Assurance Framework confirms:

- the Accountable Body arrangements for funding received from Government;
- that the use of resources is subject to the usual local authority checks and balances - including the financial duties and rules which require authorities to act prudently in spending, which are overseen and checked by the responsible Chief Finance Officer (the Section 151 Officer) and to ensure that annual accounts are published;
- where applicable, that investment decisions using public funds will be made with reference to statutory requirements, conditions of the funding and local objectives (e.g. economic strategy, transport objectives);
- the arrangements for effective and meaningful engagement of local partners to inform key decisions.

1.4 SELEP Transition agreement

The SELEP transition agreement that transfers local responsibilities from Essex County Council, as the outgoing former Accountable Body for SELEP, to East Sussex County Council, as the incoming Accountable Body, outlines the following expectations of what future arrangements will be:

- That there will be the Incoming Accountable Bodies (IABs) and their geographical remit;
- That the IABs will be responsible for includes undertaking Accountable Body functions for Ongoing Projects;
- That liabilities for Ongoing Projects lie with IABs;

- That Essex County Council is released as the SELEP Accountable Body for Ongoing Projects;
- That Essex County Council will continue as Accountable Body for the Completed Projects;
- An obligation to cooperate for reporting and compliance purposes.

For the purposes of this agreement, projects that have already spent their full grant/loan allocation, as well as any match funding, and have achieved practical completion of the project, including the delivery of all of the project milestones, outputs and outcomes as outlined in the original business case (subject to any approved amendments) are considered “completed” at the point of transition from SELEP to the County Council.

Any other projects in the county that have received Local Growth Fund (LGF), Growing Places Fund (GPF) or Getting Building Fund (GBF) funding but have not met these requirements are considered “ongoing”.

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2. East Sussex Local Assurance

2.1 East Sussex Accountable Body arrangements

Accountable Body responsibilities

As the Accountable Body, the County Council is responsible for ensuring that the usual Local Authority checks and balances apply to the awards of public funding directed by Government, or other appropriate funding bodies.

For 'legacy SELEP programmes' (see next section), the financial responsibilities of the County Council as Accountable Body are supported by a set of agreed systems and practices which are managed through the 'Growth Programme Oversight Group' (GPOG) - a senior officer group comprising members from the County Council's Communities, Economy and Transport department, as well as Business Services and Governance Services departments, reporting to the 'Oversight and Escalation Board' (OEB) which is Chaired by the County Councils Director of Communities, Economy and Transport and includes the Assistant Director, Economy and Section 151 Officer. These groups will support timely, informed decision making which delivers value for money.

There is an expectation that the County Council will act as local Accountable Body for elements of future funding streams announced by Government. As the Accountable Body, the County Council will hold overall legal accountability for the funding streams and will be responsible for overseeing the correct administration of financial affairs when these affairs relate to public funds.

The County Council will put in place the necessary governance and assurance arrangements for all future growth funding programmes, meeting funding provider requirements and ensuring all legal and other statutory obligations in the delivery of projects and activities are adhered to.

The County Council will adhere to its public law duties, including the public sector equality duty, public procurement law, data protection law, the subsidy control regime and relevant guidance set by HM Treasury in line with the principles in [Managing Public Money \(MPM\)](#).

The County Council will complete a Fraud Risk Assessment to ensure the safe administration of grants and that appropriate measures are put in place to mitigate against the risk of both fraud and payment error.

The County Council will monitor risk across all projects and activities from both the legacy SELEP programmes as well as any new programmes that may emerge. Risk criteria will be aligned with internal corporate risk reporting requirements such as departmental capital boards or corporate risk registers as appropriate.

Legacy SELEP programmes

Following the closure of the SELEP and the integration of LEP functions into local authorities, the County Council has become the Accountable Body for all ongoing projects in the county that have previously received Local Growth Fund (LGF), Growing Places Fund (GPF) or Getting Building Fund (GBF) funding. These are now referred to as 'legacy SELEP projects' and will fall under one of the legacy SELEP programmes (i.e. LGF, GPF or GBF).

Projects that have already spent their full grant/loan allocation, as well as any match funding, and have achieved practical completion of the project, including the delivery of all of the project milestones, outputs and outcomes as outlined in the original business case (subject to

any approved amendments) are considered “completed” at the point of transition from SELEP to the County Council. Accountability for these projects remains with Essex County Council through their historic role as Outgoing Accountable Body for SELEP.

The County Council will continue to monitor the legacy SELEP projects until they reach the point where they have met all the contractual monitoring requirements in the funding agreement or have delivered all the outputs that the project is capable of.

A list of the legacy SELEP projects that have met either of these criteria will be submitted as part of the bi-annual reports for approval by the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development, with MHCLG notified of the outcome of this report.

The County Council will report directly to MHCLG on project progress, spend and benefits realisation for LGF and GBF legacy SELEP projects every six months for the 2024/25 financial year. Further guidance is expected from MHCLG on whether this will continue past this date.

In addition to providing monitoring returns as required, the County Council will communicate with MHCLG via regular meetings between senior officers.

To maintain greater oversight over East Sussex legacy SELEP projects, and in line with the historic SELEP monitoring, the County Council will continue to request updates from all legacy SELEP projects every quarter unless otherwise agreed.

Programme related functions historically undertaken by SELEP, such as identifying high risk projects and assessing project change requests for legacy SELEP projects, have now been taken on by the County Council as part of the LEP transition. A detailed breakdown of these tasks and how they will be managed is outlined in Section 3, Assurance Framework processes.

Following the closure of the SELEP and the integration of LEP functions into local authorities, the County Council has become the Accountable Body for the East Sussex Growth Hub. The County Council will confirm Growth Hub deliverables and priorities to the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) to comply with Conditions of Core Funding and will also comply with the conditions set out in relation to quarterly drawdown of funds as set out in the Grant Agreement between DBT and the County Council. In addition to providing monitoring returns as required, the County Council will communicate with MHCLG via regular meetings between officers. In particular, the Council will provide intelligence reporting on: local economic conditions; local business needs and concerns; economic opportunities or shocks; and the health of the local business support ecosystem. In all respects, the County Council will comply with the 2024-2025 Growth Hub monitoring and evaluation framework (or its successor).

Business cases

Where required by any funding programmes, and at a predetermined stage of the application process, applicants will be asked to submit a business case.

In instances where a business case template is provided by the funding provider, these will be utilised. In any instance where a business case must be completed without a pre-existing template, the County Council will draft one.

All business cases, for both legacy SELEP projects and new funding programmes must:

- include a value for money assessment and follow the appropriate Government guidance on appraisal and evaluation;
- set out a statement of strategic and viable objectives and the specific outcomes that the project is intended to achieve;

- set out how they will comply with public sector procurement rules, even if the organisation is not ordinarily required to do so;
- provide a risk register, project programme, funding profile and monitoring and evaluation plan;
- include sign-off by the project delivery organisation's Chief Finance Officer (or equivalent).

Business cases for County Council led projects will follow the Corporate Funding protocol.

Business cases submitted by any external organisation will require endorsement from the Oversight and Escalation Board, with final approval from the appropriate Lead Member. If externally dictated timelines do not allow a report to be taken to the Lead Member prior to a deadline for submitting an approved list of projects, the OEB will decide the appropriate approach to funding call governance, with any final prioritised shortlist of projects/business cases agreed in consultation with the Lead Member.

For any future business case appraisals required as part of the management of the legacy SELEP programmes, an independent technical evaluator (ITE) will be appointed, with any costs incurred paid for by the project deliverer submitting the business case. The ITE review and scrutiny of business cases will ensure that appropriate checks and balances are completed, and that fair and accurate information is presented to decision makers.

For new growth funding programmes where the County Council is acting as Accountable Body, a decision will be taken by the Oversight and Escalation Board on a case-by-case basis depending on the details of the funding programme as to whether an ITE review of business cases is required. Where funding restrictions are in place, the option to establish an internal ESCC panel can be explored. This decision will be made prior to issuing any call for funding and will be published as part of the funding call. Where appropriate, thresholds for ITE involvement may also be applied to the funding programme. Where it is decided that an ITE review is required, the bidding organisation will be expected to pay any costs incurred in the process.

In addition to appropriate technical evaluation of business cases, the ESCC Finance team will review any budgets/financial profiles, and the Treasury team will undertake an assessment of the project sponsors liquidity (see section 3.1 for details of the process for new funding calls including business case assessments).

Funding agreements

For any new growth programmes and the SELEP legacy programmes, the County Council is responsible for establishing a funding agreement with each project deliverer.

For all new projects:

- The project application / business case will have been subject to the Council's financial due diligence checks (as outlined in section 3.1) prior to approval;
- The Council will enter into an appropriate funding agreement with the project deliverer prior to the release of any funds to that project;
- Following the County Council's due diligence checks, additional technical, legal and financial conditions may be attached to each individual grant agreement (as appropriate);
- The County Council will work with project deliverers to align finance payments against deliverables (outputs/outcomes) to provide financial assurance to the County Council on the delivery of each project. This information will then be incorporated into the Schedules

produced within each funding agreement;

- Funding agreements will confirm that project applicants are required to:
 - demonstrate clear evidence of value for money provided by the project;
 - comply with procurement legislation, even if they are not ordinarily obliged to do so, and to provide assurance that all procurement requirements have been met, including by supplying evidence upon request by the Council;
 - demonstrate good organisational governance;
 - Demonstrate compliance with all other appropriate legislation;
 - Ensure comprehensive access to information and records as required by the Council;
 - Meet all requirements regarding the receipting of goods;
- The funding agreement will ensure adequate ability to enforce the terms of the agreement as well as clear remedies where the recipient fails to comply with the terms of the agreement.

Note that for the majority of existing legacy SELEP projects, the funding agreements are back-to-back agreements that match the original terms and conditions between the County Council and SELEP. As such the County Council did not have responsibility for setting the original terms and conditions of those back-to-back funding agreements. For all legacy SELEP projects, the County Council is bound by the existing terms and conditions.

Document Retention

In line with Government requirements, and the SELEP transition agreement, retention of all relevant documentation for the projects managed under this Assurance Framework - such as project business cases, contracts, variations, financial claims with supporting evidence, final monitoring forms - will be kept for 12 years from the date of the end of the funding period on the departmental SharePoint site. Original legal documents will be archived by Legal Services in accordance with the process maps set out in section 3. Soft copies of documents shall be retained on the departmental SharePoint site.

2.2 Governance arrangements

Governance oversight

Oversight and Escalation Board (OEB)

The Oversight and Escalation Board provides the accountability structure for decision-making for this Assurance Framework. It is responsible for taking appropriate decisions on legacy SELEP projects as well as for any appropriate future funding schemes, in line with the County Council's corporate funding protocol, and is responsible for the sign-off of appropriate funding decisions, or endorsement of decisions subject to Lead Member approval. The responsibilities of the OEB are summarised in more detail in the next section (Table 1 below).

Membership of the Oversight and Escalation Board is:

- Director of Communities, Economy and Transport (Decision Maker);
- Section 151 Officer (Decision Maker);
- Assistant Director, Economy (Decision Maker);
- Solicitor (Advisor);

- Head of Service for Economic Development, Skills, Culture and Infrastructure (Advisor);
- Head of Finance for Communities, Economy and Transport, BSD and Governance (Advisor)
- Team Manager, Major Projects and Growth (Advisor)
- Local Growth Programme Manager (Advisor);
- Team Manager, Economic Development (Advisor, as required).

Secretariat functions will be provided by the County Council's Major Projects and Growth Team, who will have no decision-making authority.

Oversight and Escalation Board meetings will take place quarterly. The board may choose to convene additional meetings on an ad-hoc basis in order to take decisions that are time sensitive. At least two decision-making members of the board, or suitable substitutes, must be in attendance at meetings to reach quorum and any decisions reached must be made unanimously. Where appropriate, the board may also choose to reach a consensus on decisions by email, without the need to convene a meeting.

Where it sees fit, the Oversight and Escalation Board may choose to escalate any decisions to the Lead Member for approval. Associated reports for any such decisions will require OEB approval before being submitted to Lead Member.

Any conflict of interests for Oversight and Escalation Board members is managed in accordance with existing County Council processes for officers and elected members.

The terms of reference for the OEB are set out in Appendix 3 of this Assurance Framework.

Growth Programme Oversight Group (GPOG)

The Growth Programme Oversight Group provides day-to-day programme and project oversight to support timely, informed decision making by the OEB.

The GPOG identifies and develops investment opportunities; provides initial project prioritisation recommendations for the award of funding, subject to approval by the OEB and Lead Member; and monitors and evaluates the impacts of its activities to improve productivity across the local economy.

The GPOG will meet monthly and comprise members from the County Council's Communities, Economy and Transport department as well as Finance, Business Services and Governance Services departments, and will be co-Chaired by the Head of Service for Economic Development, Skills, Culture and Infrastructure and the Head of Finance for CET, BSD and Governance.

Any potential issues that cannot be resolved by the GPOG are escalated to the OEB.

The GPOG reports into the OEB and final decisions and recommendations are ratified by the OEB with appropriate Lead Member approval as required.

The terms of reference for the GPOG are set out in Appendix 4 of this Assurance Framework.

Corporate Management Team (CMT)

Update reports will be provided to CMT each quarter for their information.

Lead Member reporting

Approval will be sought from the appropriate Lead Member for:

- Any new business cases submitted by external organisations for funding, prior to submission to funders;*
- The County Council to enter into any new funding and/or legal agreements in relation to

the work covered by this Assurance Framework; and

- Project Change Requests for budget changes over £250,000 or changes to project scope.

*This assumes that the timescales set by Government are achievable/realistic to allow a formal Lead Member decision. Where there are concerns about timescales, the OEB shall be consulted and determine the best approach given the exceptional circumstances.

In addition, reports will be submitted to the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development (LMSMED) every six months outlining project and financial updates, decisions made under delegated approvals, and any significant changes to projects over the prior six months, as well as a forecast for the next six.

Governance structure: roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities within the County Council to support and enable the delivery of this Assurance Framework are set out in Table 1 below. The roles and responsibilities outside of the County Council are set out in Table 2.

Table 1: East Sussex County Council roles and responsibilities

Internal Governance	
Roles	Responsibilities
Lead Member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review/approve business cases submitted by external partners or internal ESCC bids during funding calls • Review/approve project change requests - changes to budget over £250,000 and/or changes to project scope. • Approve the County Council entering into any new funding and/or legal agreements in relation to the work covered by this Assurance Framework;
Corporate Management	
<p>Oversight and Escalation Board (OEB)</p> <p>Membership of the Oversight and Escalation Board is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Communities, Economy and Transport (Decision Maker); • Section 151 Officer (Decision Maker); • Assistant Director, Economy (Decision Maker); • Solicitor (Advisor); • Head of Service for Economic Development, Skills, Culture and Infrastructure (Advisor); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review/approving project change requests relating to deadline extensions. • Review/approving project change requests - changes to budget up to £250,000 • Endorse business cases submitted by external partners or internal ESCC bids during funding calls, subject to Lead Member approval. • Decide approach to funding call governance/approvals process if externally set timescales would not allow sufficient time to follow the approach set out in the East Sussex Local Growth Assurance Framework. • Approval of legacy SELEP project closures (subject to Lead Member confirmation).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Finance for Communities, Economy and Transport, BSD and Governance (Advisor) • Team Manager, Major Projects and Growth (Advisor) • Local Growth Programme Manager (Advisor); • Team Manager, Economic Development (Advisor, as required) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalating decisions to Lead Member as appropriate. • Providing steer and/or authorising approach to resolve any disputes or issues referred by the GPOG. • Taking any strategic decisions pertaining to the East Sussex Growth Hub.
Section 151 Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorisation of legacy SELEP programme monitoring back to Government departments.
CET, Business & Governance Services	
<p>Growth Programme Oversight Group (GPOG)</p> <p>The group includes representatives from the following County Council teams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Finance – Legal/Governance – Economic Development, Skills, Culture and Infrastructure – Other suitable expertise as required (i.e. Procurement, Treasury) <p>The group is accountable to the Head of Service for Economic Development, Skills, Culture and Infrastructure and the Head of Finance for CET, BSD and Governance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight of new growth funding calls in EDSCI service area, including bidding and assessment. • Identifying and escalating high-risk projects to the OEB. • Ensuring that funding is used in line with grant agreements and that appropriate management controls are in place. • Authorising monitoring for legacy SELEP projects. • Analysis and proposal of legacy SELEP project closures. • Ensuring the implementation of this Assurance Framework. • Leading open funding calls and ensuring the calls are widely publicised. • Coordinating reports as required. • Championing successes within the county, including projects which should be recognised as innovative, or examples of best practice. • Ensuring ongoing local engagement with public and private sector partners to inform key decisions and set out how they will evidence effective engagement. • Ensuring the transparency and accountability of decisions and recommendations.
Major Projects and Growth Team (MPG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring performance of project deliverers and reporting of project spend and progress.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting on progress to funding providers as required. • Verifying eligible expenditure prior to payment release. • Completing payment request forms. • Ensuring project expenditure is appropriate and project performance remains on track. • Delivery of new funding calls including bidding and assessment programme. • Responsible for contract management and addressing adherence by the County Council and project sponsors to the funding agreement clauses. • Where relevant, ensure application of the Loan Default and Variation guidance.
Economic Development Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for all operational decisions in accordance with the requirements set out in the Grant Agreement between the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and the Authority as regards core Growth Hub delivery and development activities. • Responsible for compliance with the Growth Hub Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. • Responsible for compliance with the terms of the Core Conditions of Funding (Grant Agreement) between DBT and the County Council. • Provide monitoring returns and intelligence reporting as required. • Responsible for drawdown of funding and compliance with end of year audit requirements.
Finance Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounts Payable team process payments to project deliverers. • Carrying out due diligence on project applications and applicants (involving Treasury Team). • Providing financial advice and guidance to validate and monitor expenditure and support financial reporting as appropriate. • Where appropriate ensure adherence to the Loan Default and Variation guidance.
Legal Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing advice and sign off on the terms of the grants/loans/SLAs and in respect of state

	<p>aid.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with officers on the preparation and completion/amendment of individual funding agreements and any future variations between the County Council and local project deliverers. • Providing legal advice and guidance as appropriate.
Internal Audit Team	<p>Where agreed as part of the risk based annual Internal Audit plan, Internal Audit will assess the key risks associated with the following and, where considered appropriate, provide independent advice and assurance that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any procedures that the County Council undertake are in accordance with the UK Government guidelines for bid application, assessment and shortlisting of projects, and ongoing governance, accountability, management and monitoring of the programmes are in place. • All application processes are clear and accessible, and bids submitted are safeguarded from potential alterations. • Bid assessment and selection processes are fair, transparent and in accordance with any appropriate guidelines. • Arrangements are in place to ensure that the funds are used in accordance with government guidelines. • Fraud Risk Assessments are undertaken to ensure the safe administration of grants and that appropriate measures are put in place to mitigate against the risk of both fraud and payment error
Procurement Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing guidance to MPG to ensure appropriate and proportionate controls to ensure that procurement undertaken by non-public sector project deliverers or beneficiaries represents value for money and minimises the risk of fraud.

Table 2: External roles and responsibilities

External Governance	
Roles	Responsibilities
Team East Sussex (TES) (see section 2.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting as the local business board / strategic advisory economic growth board for East Sussex. • Providing advisory support and insight for legacy SELEP projects and, where appropriate, potential future funding initiatives. • Providing recommendations and endorsements for consideration as part of County Council decision making. • Where appropriate, informing and consulting with relevant sectoral boards to support good governance and decision making.
Independent Technical Evaluator (note this function could be undertaken by an Internal ESCC Assessment team based on a decision by the OEB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gateway assessment and sifting. • Assessments of funding bids and recommended initial prioritisation of projects. • Supporting internal governance reporting and completion of applications. • Developing any assessment criteria in line with any technical guidance for all future funding programmes.

Other key documents and policies

As part of governance arrangements, the County Council's Communities, Economy and Transport (CET) Loan Variation and Loan Default Statement and Framework will be adhered to where appropriate (see 4.2 for process maps for loan default and variations) as well as adherence to the ESCC Project Management and Business Case toolkit and ESCC Records Management retention and disposal schedule and any other ESCC policies.

2.3 Accountability

Assurance and scrutiny

As the County Council does not have a Devolution Deal in place we will be utilising our existing governance arrangements such as Audit Committee and Place Scrutiny Committee as required.

Two reports a year will be presented to the Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development for approval, outlining programme spend in the past financial year, forecast spend for the upcoming financial year and programme updates including any project changes approved under delegated authority.

Financial accountability

Financial accountability is provided through the County Council's Section 151 Officer having oversight of all programmes via the Oversight and Escalation Board (OEB) who will be required to provide authorisation of new, or amendments to existing, Service Level Agreements with Government, and monitoring returns to Government, as well as endorsing new project business cases.

Monitoring and evaluation

As part of the LEP transition process, the County Council will report on project progress, spend and realisation of outputs and outcomes for Local Growth Fund (LGF) and Getting Building Fund (GBF) legacy SELEP projects every six months, directly to MHCLG, for the 2024/25 financial year. Further guidance is expected from MHCLG on whether this will continue past this date.

In addition to providing monitoring returns as required, the County Council will communicate with MHCLG via regular meetings between senior officers.

To maintain greater oversight over East Sussex based legacy SELEP projects, and in line with the historic SELEP monitoring, the County Council will continue to request updates from all legacy SELEP projects every quarter. Where a project has completed spend of any awarded funding and it is not considered to be a high risk, the GPOG can decide to request updates only every six months, in line with MHCLG requirements, rather than every quarter.

The County Council will require post-project evaluation for legacy SELEP projects in line with what is set out in each project's funding agreement.

For future funding streams it is expected that the County Council will be held accountable to Government, either directly or via another accountable body, via a schedule of regular monitoring requests.

As part of County Council best practice, advice will be sought from the Internal Audit Team on new funding calls and processes required.

Requests for information and complaints relating to any programmes covered by this Assurance Framework will be managed in accordance with existing County Council processes as outlined on the County Council website.

2.4 Engagement with business, partners and stakeholders

Economic growth board and business engagement

Stakeholder engagement is a vital part of overall assurance, enabling a broader set of views and perspectives to be considered in decision making. There are two stakeholder groups in particular that are fundamental to this process - the voice of *business* and the views of the county's *economic growth board*. In East Sussex this is achieved through a single board - Team East Sussex.

Team East Sussex (TES) is the strategic advisory economic growth board for the county of East Sussex. Its primary aim is to drive forward economic growth and prosperity in the county.

TES is an independent, *business-led*, private/public body, with representation from business members and business representative bodies, including the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and Chambers of Commerce, the voluntary and community sector, further education, higher education and the local authority leaders of all of the county, borough and district councils

across East Sussex.

TES is involved with funding programmes at various stages of their progress and development:

- For new funding programmes, open calls for projects are issued through TES (and its sectoral boards, see below), whose members disseminate and promote the opportunities through their networks;
- TES is consulted on any project prioritisation conducted by the County Council, effectively acting as a sounding board as required;
- TES is provided with regular updates on the progress of ongoing projects, particularly legacy SELEP projects, and is given updates on any 'high-risk' projects.

TES is an *advisory* board, and is able to offer suggestions, recommendations or commentary of any kind to the County Council for its decision making at any of the above stages.

The TES Terms of Reference are fully aligned with this Assurance Framework, and by extension with Government guidance on LEP integration and, as a matter of best practice, the English Devolution Accountability Framework (EDAF). The TES Terms of Reference set out the precise roles and responsibilities of TES, under the key functions of *Strategic direction*; *Project consideration and prioritisation*; *Lobbying and promotion*; and *Engagement and business voice*, all of which are described in detail.

TES aims to operate in a fully transparent manner at all times, maintaining a clear Conflict of Interests policy, and with a Board Recruitment policy that enables members to be appointed through an open, competitive and non-discriminatory process. All information on TES - including details of membership, policies, Terms of Reference, registers of interests and minutes of meetings - is published on the [County Council website](#).

Business voice

The County Council has embedded a strong, independent and diverse local business voice into its decision-making processes. Team East Sussex builds on the successes of the SELEP model, instilling the same principles of being business led with a business majority, to ensure the voice of business is fully involved in regional decision making.

TES business members are appointed through an open and competitive process, and TES reviews its membership on an ongoing basis to ensure it maintains as broad a representation as possible across business sectors and the local geography.

TES provides the voice of business in steering the county's economic growth agenda and has worked with the County Council and other local stakeholders to oversee the creation of a new economic strategy for the area - the [East Sussex Economic Prosperity Strategy](#) (see section 2.6).

The business voice function also plays an active role in other local partnerships, including Town Deal Boards (see below).

Other local boards and partnerships

Engagement with other boards, either through the direct involvement of County Council officers or through Team East Sussex members, includes membership of all of our local Town Boards; Levelling Up Partnership and Long-Term Plan for Towns Boards; Enterprise Zone Boards; and Funding Simplification Pathfinder Pilot Boards, thus ensuring effective and meaningful engagement of local partners to inform key decisions.

Communication with all of our borough and district councils is achieved directly through officer engagement and through Team East Sussex, with both senior officers and Councillors.

TES maintains close links with “sectoral” or “special interest” boards to help drive forward activity, including boards on Business, Culture, Housing and Commercial Development, Environment, and Skills. Similar to TES, these active working groups are partnerships of private and public sector, plus social enterprise, education providers and more, ensuring all of the key stakeholders for each sector are represented, with a strong business voice. Sectoral board activity is regularly reported to TES for information and endorsement, and all boards are supported by County Council officers.

Public engagement and communications

Government funding opportunities announced by and issued through the County Council will be openly publicised on the County Council’s website and via public press releases and social media. An Expression of Interest form for each funding call will be made publicly available on the County Council’s website.

Communications will also be promoted through Team East Sussex, its sectoral boards and partners, to ensure publicity is maximised.

In addition to the publicly available information outlined under ‘Transparency’ below, an email address will also be made available on the County Council’s website, which members of the public can use to contact the County Council at any time regarding the projects and programmes covered by this Assurance Framework.

2.5 Transparency

The County Council seeks to operate in an open and transparent manner at all times.

Information on funding programmes shall be made publicly available on the County Council’s website, except where such information is not suitable for release into the public domain.

Published information will include summaries of any projects funded through the County Council, project business cases (redacted as necessary), updates on project progress, and records of any key decisions pertaining to the funding programmes.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 shall apply to all papers and records of decisions.

2.6 Strategy alignment

As part of the LEP transition process undertaken through 2023/24, the government stipulated that one of the key functions it expected Upper Tier Local Authorities to assume was strategic economic planning, encouraging areas to produce or update economic strategies to support local decision making. This has been achieved through the development of the East Sussex Economic Prosperity Strategy (see below). All future projects funded under this Assurance Framework are expected to demonstrate alignment with the East Sussex Economic Prosperity Strategy.

Projects may also choose to show additional alignment with other sectoral strategies, as outlined below:

Name of strategy	Description and how it fits in the Assurance Framework
East Sussex Economic Prosperity Strategy 2024-2050	<p>Produced by the County Council and Team East Sussex, the East Sussex Economic Prosperity Strategy is a strategy for the long term. Looking to 2050, it seeks to secure sustainable economic growth, setting out how over the next generation, East Sussex can secure better opportunities and living standards for people who live in the county, and how businesses can develop new routes to value creation.</p> <p>The Strategy is a guide to the actions that need to be taken to support sustainable prosperity today and in the years to come.</p> <p>Considering the impact of transformational changes in the environment, technology and the county's demographics enables us to prioritise investment now to meet the needs of future generations.</p>
East Sussex Cultural Strategy 2013-2025	<p>The purpose of this Strategy is to identify reasonable steps which can be taken to better understand, support and grow the cultural sector. We have an ambitious vision with three identified priorities that should be understood to be complementary and interdependent.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create an environment where great cultural experiences are available to everyone to enhance their quality of life; 2. Create an environment which enables the cultural and creative economy to expand and enhances our ability to attract and retain other businesses; 3. Develop and promote well packaged cultural tourism offers which celebrate the identity of East Sussex, raise its profile and attract more visitors and businesses to the County.
Visitor Economy Strategy for Growth 2024-2034	<p>Priority 1 - Destination Development Delivering sector transformation through industry support programmes curated to ensure the sector is successful and resilient, the needs of potential visitors and visitors to Sussex are met and a world class welcome is created. Deliver sector transformation programmes that meet our other priorities such as accessibility, sustainability, nature positive, climate mitigation, technical and other innovation.</p> <p>Priority 2 - Destination Marketing Concentrating on visitor markets and audience segments able to deliver sustainable growth and bring benefits to local destinations. Working in partnership to reach valuable but expensive to reach markets e.g. international/trade.</p> <p>Priority 3 - Product development (incredible experiences)</p>

	<p>Delivering high quality tourism infrastructure and developing the visitor experience to strengthen the appeal and distinctiveness of Sussex to extend stays and reduce seasonality.</p> <p>Priority 4 - Advocacy and networking Facilitating a connected ecosystem to stimulate innovation, creativity, and effective and efficient solutions: creating a tourism powerhouse of leadership, advocacy, fundraising and inspiration. Creating a coalition of willing stakeholders working together to deliver a world class destination experience, ensuring the warmest of welcomes for first time and repeat visitors across Sussex. Support businesses to create clusters to stimulate new products and innovation, and respond to emerging threats such as nature depletions and climate change</p>
<p>East Sussex Local Transport Plan 2024 - 2050 and Investment Plan</p> <p>Supporting strategies - Bus Service Improvement Plan, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan</p>	<p>The East Sussex Local Transport Plan is a statutory document which sets out the County's strategy and priorities for investing in and maintaining transport infrastructure to support sustainable economic growth and housing delivery, reduce carbon emissions, create healthier and vibrant communities, and improve connectivity. The emerging LTP4, which was adopted by the County Council in October 2024, covers the period 2024 to 2050.</p> <p>Transport schemes identified in the current and emerging LTP, and its supporting documents such as the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), are and will continue to be delivered using Local Growth Fund funding secured previously through SELEP as well as other Government funding sources.</p>
<p>Borough and District Local Plans</p>	<p>There are six local planning authorities in East Sussex who have responsibility for developing and updating Local Plans setting out their spatial growth plan for housing, employment and other developments in their respective geographies. These are Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother and Wealden. In addition, the South Downs National Park Authority are required to deliver a Local Plan for their geography from Winchester in the west to the edge of Eastbourne. Employment sites and/or site infrastructure schemes identified in the Local Plans have, and could continue to be, funded by SELEP legacy funding streams, as well as any future funding that becomes available via TES calls for projects.</p>

2.7 Value for money

For the County Council to achieve its long-term strategic vision, it must ensure it achieves value for money (VFM) in all of its activities and the services it provides.

VFM is about obtaining the maximum benefit from the resources available to the County Council by balancing inputs, outputs and outcomes. In simple terms, VFM measures costs, performance and satisfaction, and is often defined as achieving the right balance between economy, efficiency and effectiveness - spending prudently, well and wisely.

- **ECONOMY:** The cost of providing services. Are inputs of appropriate quality bought at a minimised price?
- **EFFECTIVENESS:** The impact of the service/function. Does it meet required outcomes? How well do these outputs achieve outcomes?
- **EFFICIENCY:** Productivity, what we obtain from what we put in. How well are inputs converted into outputs?

Achieving value for money through the use of cost and performance information to improve management and service delivery is integral to and a key outcome of both financial sustainability and strong governance, as represented by informed decisions and risk management processes.

Value for Money

Any business cases submitted under this Assurance Framework will be reviewed by the County Council's Finance and Treasury teams to ensure agreement with any financial assumptions and that the Council is aware of and accepts any potential risks and liabilities being proposed.

As part of the ITE assessment of any business case, they will scrutinise any statements and assertions made in the business case on project finances to determine if they are realistic and provide value for money.

For future funding streams, the expectation will remain that any business cases submitted will include a value for money assessment and outline how the project meets any guidance provided by the funding provider, in line with established Government guidance including the HM Treasury Green Book.

All future business cases will be expected to contain a clear outline of the bidding organisations corporate governance structure and processes

Bidding organisation will be expected to outline how they comply with local government procurement legislation, even if they are not ordinarily obliged to do so, and to provide assurance that all procurement requirements have been met. Regular requests to see evidence to support claims will be requested as part of ongoing project monitoring.

Business cases for County Council led projects must follow the Corporate Funding protocol prior to being submitted.

All business cases, whether submitted by an external organisation or an internal County Council department, will require endorsement from the Oversight and Escalation Board and be subject to final approval from the appropriate Lead Member.

Options appraisal and prioritisation

As outlined above, an independent technical evaluator (ITE) will be appointed as required for the appraisal and prioritisation of any future business cases required as part of the management of the legacy SELEP programme. Where funding restrictions are in place, the option to establish an internal ESCC panel can be explored. These assessments will consider the project's fit with the eligibility criteria and with local strategic objectives.

The independent assessment will be conducted based on the following criteria:

- need for Intervention;
- viability;

- deliverability;
- expected benefits;
- pace of benefit realisation;
- contribution to the establishment of a revolving fund;
- such other criteria as the County Council may determine.

As the specific requirements for any future funding streams are yet to be determined, it is not possible to be prescriptive as to how these projects will be appraised and prioritised. However, the expectation will remain that any business cases submitted will:

- outline how they meet any guidance provided by the funding provider;
- have a clear rationale and set out the need for any interventions and how the project meets the strategic objectives of the funding provider, as well as the County Council (see section 2.6);
- set out clearly defined inputs, activities, outputs and anticipated outcomes;
- demonstrate that deliverability and risks have been appropriately considered along with appropriate mitigating action.

2.8 Risk Management

In accordance with the County Council's Risk Management Framework, a risk register will be held by the GPOG with the Programme Manager for East Sussex Growth acting as Service Manager following the approach outlined in this Assurance Framework.

This will utilise the template from the County Council project management, building off of the project monitoring returns and incorporating programme level risks.

Where project or programme risks are deemed to be sufficiently significant or where they cannot be effectively managed within the project/programme structure, these will be escalated to either the departmental risk registers or the County Council's strategic risk register.

2.9 Best practice, equality and diversity

County Council officers, Members and representatives are expected to behave in an open and collaborative way that views each individual as an equal and values the contribution of all partners and stakeholders, taking account of equality and diversity, and promoting inclusion.

The County Council is subject to and supports the public sector equality duty set out within the Equality Act 2010. Accordingly, all decisions taken by the County Council, including by the Oversight and Escalation Board, will pay due regard to: Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the act; Advancing equality of opportunity between people from different equality groups; and Fostering good relations between people from different equality groups.

County Council officers, Members and representatives are required to maintain high standards in the way they undertake their duties, and are therefore required to give due regard to the Principles of Public Life, known as the 'Nolan Principles', set out below:

- SELFLESSNESS - to serve only the public interest and never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person;
- INTEGRITY - not to place themselves in situations where their integrity may be questioned, not behave improperly and on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour;
- OBJECTIVITY - make decisions on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits;
- ACCOUNTABILITY - to be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities and cooperate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their office;
- OPENNESS - to be as open as possible about their actions and those of the County Council and be prepared to give reasons for those actions;
- HONESTY - not to place themselves in situations where their honesty may be questioned, not behave improperly and, on all occasions, avoid the appearance of such behaviour;
- LEADERSHIP - promote and support these principles by leadership and by example and always act in a way that secures or preserves public confidence.

The above principles of equality and diversity also apply to the county's strategic advisory economic growth board, Team East Sussex (see section 2.4).

Prior to launching any new funding programme for which the County Council is responsible, the programme will be assessed for its equality impact via an ESCC Equality Impact Assessment.

2.10 Improving performance

Recognising the fluidity and lifetime of any investment programmes, this Assurance Framework will initially be reviewed after one year, and thereafter on an ad-hoc basis, to ensure continued compliance with any changes to legislation or any new monitoring requirements. If any significant changes are proposed, MHCLG will be notified.

The activity of the Oversight and Escalation Board and associated officers will be monitored by reporting to CMT and Lead Member to ensure continued adherence to this framework.

3. Assurance Framework processes

3.1 New funding programmes

Funding call prioritisation

Steps	Responsible person (s)	Task
Pre-application stage		
Step 1	Government	Issues funding call and confirms the approach
Step 2	Growth Programme Oversight Group	Reviews new funding programme, makes recommendation on whether to apply for it and approach to take (if not mandated)
Step 3	Oversight and Escalation Board	Consider GPOG recommendations and the issuing of a funding call (if not mandated) as well as appropriate timescales for Lead Member decision making. Note - if it is not realistic/ achievable to secure formal Lead Member approval within timelines dictated by Government, the OEB will consider the best way forward to agree bid prioritisation.
Step 4	Major Projects and Growth	Complete DMT proforma bidding protocol. Notify CMT and relevant internal teams including External Funding, Legal, Finance & Treasury
Step 5	Major Projects and Growth	Complete LMSMED proforma
Step 6	Government	Issue guidance note
Step 7	GPOG	Decide on level of support needed by Internal Assessment Team / Independent Technical Evaluator (ITE) and website and communication requirements/opportunities.
Step 8	Major Projects and Growth	Meet with Internal Assessment Team / ITE to agree approach/timings/cost (if required),
Step 9	Major Projects and Growth & Economic Development	Set up dedicated webpage (if required),
Step 10	Economic Development	Notify Team East Sussex (TES) members the outline process with next steps and expected dates

Step 11	Major Projects and Growth & Economic Development	Issue funding call
Step 12	Major Projects and Growth	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) completed (if required)
Deadline for applications closes		
Step 13	Major Projects and Growth	Review of project applications/potential discussion with project applicants dependent on funding process incorporating input from ITE as required
	Treasury	Financial appraisal of applicant's finances
	Finance/ITE	Financial appraisal of applications
Step 14	GPOG	Initial assessment of project applications based on outcomes from Step 13 and produce initial proposed shortlist.
Step 15	Major Projects and Growth	TES report drafted, reviewed and signed off
Step 16	Director/Assistant Director	Brief TES chair
Step 17	Economic Development	Circulate report to TES and CMT
Step 18	TES	Review report and provide any feedback/recommendations
Step 19	GPOG	Final report and prioritised list produced
Step 20	OEB	Endorse final prioritised shortlist of projects and business cases.
Step 21	Major Projects and Growth	Write and submit report to LMSMED, considering need for CMT for review
Step 22	Lead Member	Considers report recommendations for approval of new project business cases and entering into financial agreements and any potential Service Level Agreement.
Step 23	Major Projects and Growth	Notify successful bidders on next steps and unsuccessful bidders of decision

Step 24	Major Projects and Growth	Submit resource request to Legal and further cover requirements with Procurement and Finance
Step 25	Legal	Review resource request and produce funding agreement for successful applicants

Service Level Agreement (SLA) for new funding programmes

Note that this process is based on the assumption that Government/other future funders will provide the initial draft SLA with the terms and conditions applied. If this is not the case, process will be reviewed.

Steps	Responsible person(s)	Task
Pre-process	LMSMED	Approves entering into SLA for new funding programme via report
Step 1	Government	Issue draft agreement
Step 2	Major Projects and Growth	Instruct Legal to undertake work then pass to Legal & Finance
Step 3	Legal & Finance	Review draft agreement and comment
Step 4	Major Projects and Growth	Review Legal/Finance comments and send to Government as appropriate
Step 5	Government	Issue final agreement
Step 6	OEB	Review and approve
Step 7	Legal	Seal document (if required)

Back-to-back funding agreements

Steps	Responsible person(s)	Task
Pre-process	OEB/Lead Member	Approve entry into funding agreements as part of approval process and following agreed 'scheme of delegation'
Step 1	Major Projects and Growth	Instruct Legal team to undertake work, ensuring awareness of need for future potential variations is factored in
Step 2	Legal	Create funding agreement template

Step 3	Major Projects and Growth	Complete template for each project and return to Legal
Step 4	Legal	Shares draft funding agreement with each bidding organisation
Step 5	Partners/Project leads	Complete and return to Legal
Step 6	Legal	Seal and complete agreement. Legal to archive and send virtual copy to MPG.

3.2 Project changes and extensions

Deadline extensions

	Responsible person(s)	Task
Step 1	Project leads/Partners	Inform need for extension and Complete a PCR
Step 2	Major Projects and Growth	Seek approval
Step 3	GPOG	Review and approve passing to OEB
Step 4	Major Projects and Growth	Instruct legal of upcoming requirements pending OEB decision
Step 5	Oversight & Escalation board	Review/approve PCRs
Step 6	Legal	Draft variation to funding agreement
Step 7	Major Projects and Growth	Provide a copy of OEB approval to Legal
Step 8	Legal	Liaise with Partner to get documents signed, completed & archive
Step 9	Major Projects and Growth & Economic Development	Inform TES via quarterly updates and give opportunity to comment

Project Change Requests (PCRs): changes to budget under £250,000

This covers the first application for a change of budget by up to £250,000, with no other changes.

	Responsible person(s)	Task
Step 1	Project lead/Partners	Inform need for extension
Step 2	Major Projects and Growth	Seek approval from GPOG
Step 3	GPOG	Review and approve passing to OEB

Step 4	Major Projects and Growth	Instruct legal of upcoming requirements pending OEB decision
Step 5	Oversight & Escalation board	Review/approve PCRs
Step 6	Finance	Capital variation requests *(With MPG/S151/Cabinet)
Step 7	S151 Officer/Members	Review capital variation request (S151 approval required if fully funded project or ESCC project with variation up to 10% of capital budget, Cabinet/Full Council approval required if ESCC project and variation greater than 10%).
Step 8	Legal	Draft variation to funding agreement if required (standard letter as part of funding agreement). Oversee signing and sealing of any required variation agreements.
Step 9	Major Projects and Growth & Economic Development	Inform TES via quarterly updates and give opportunity to comment

Project Change Requests (PCRs): changes to budget above £250,000 or project scope

This includes changes to budget of more than £250,000 or second (or more) change to budget or changes to project scope.

	Responsible person(s)	Task
Step 1	Project leads/Partners	Inform need for extension and complete a Project Change Request (PCR)
Step 2	GPOG	Reviews PCR and makes recommendation to OEB (incorporating review of budget by Finance)
Step 3	Oversight & Escalation board	Review and endorse PCR
Step 4	Major Projects and Growth	Write and submit report to LMSMED, considering need for CMT review
Step 5	Lead Member	Considers report recommendations for approval of PCR
Step 6	Finance	Capital variation requests *(With MPG/S151/Cabinet)
Step 7	S151 Officer/Members	Review capital variation request (S151 approval required if fully funded project or ESCC project with variation up to 10% of capital budget, Cabinet/Full Council approval required if ESCC project and variation greater than 10%).
Step 8	Major Projects and Growth	Instruct Legal and provide a copy of OEB approval to Legal
Step 9	Legal	Draft variation to funding agreement

Step 10	Legal	Liaise with Partner to get documents signed/completed & archive
Step 11	Major Projects and Growth & Economic Development	Inform TES via quarterly updates and give opportunity to comment

3.3 Identifying high-risk projects

Identifying existing projects that are considered ‘high-risk’ through their RAG ratings and monitoring. Information on future high-risk projects will be captured via monitoring.

	Responsible Person(s)	Task
Step 1	Major Projects and Growth	Information is captured by scheduled monitoring
Step 2	GPOG	Review information and flag to OEB any new high-risk projects as appropriate. Capture information on programme risk register.
Step 3	Major Projects and Growth & Economic Development	CMT & TES update on high-risk projects for information

3.4 Monitoring and reporting processes

Loan repayment process

Below process assumes MPG are leading the programme. If utilising process in relation to a programme led by another team, replace MPG below as appropriate.

	Responsible person(s)	Task
Step 1	Finance	Work through plan with MPG of when repayments will be made to ESCC
Step 2	Major Projects and Growth	Set up project partners in SAP for payments (if required)
Step 3	Major Projects and Growth	Confirm repayments as expected via monitoring
Step 4	Major Projects and Growth	Remind & chase partners (if required)
Step 5	Finance	Principal Finance Officer to ensure loan repayment has been physically made into ESCC bank account

Step 6	Finance	Agree with Head of Finance payment form to sign off or transfer journal to new GPF loan pot
Step 7	Head of Service (Finance)	Authorise journals/transfer re repayments

See 4.2 for details of the existing loan default and loan variation processes outlined in the Communities Economy and Transport (CET) Loan Variation and Loan Default Statement and Framework

Quarterly monitoring

To maintain greater oversight over East Sussex legacy SELEP projects, and in line with the historic SELEP monitoring, the County Council will continue to request updates from all projects every quarter, unless a project has completed spend of any awarded funding and is not considered to be a high risk, in which case updates can be requested every six months (in line with MHCLG requirements).

	Responsible person(s)	Task
Step 1	Major Projects and Growth	Send monitoring request to Project leads
Step 2	Project leads	Complete monitoring and return
Step 3	Major Projects and Growth / Finance	Review returned data
Step 4	Finance	Reconcile financial information to accounting system
Step 5	Major Projects and Growth	Request sign off from GPOG
Step 6	GPOG	Sign-off of both outputs & financials
Step 7	Major Projects and Growth & Economic Development	TES informed via dashboard updates
Step 8	Major Projects and Growth	CMT informed via quarterly reports
Step 9	Major Projects and Growth	Members informed via 6 monthly report

Six-monthly reporting to MHCLG

	Responsible person(s)	Task
Step 1	Government	Request reporting
Step 2	Major Projects and Growth	Send monitoring to Project leads
Step 3	Project leads	Complete monitoring and return

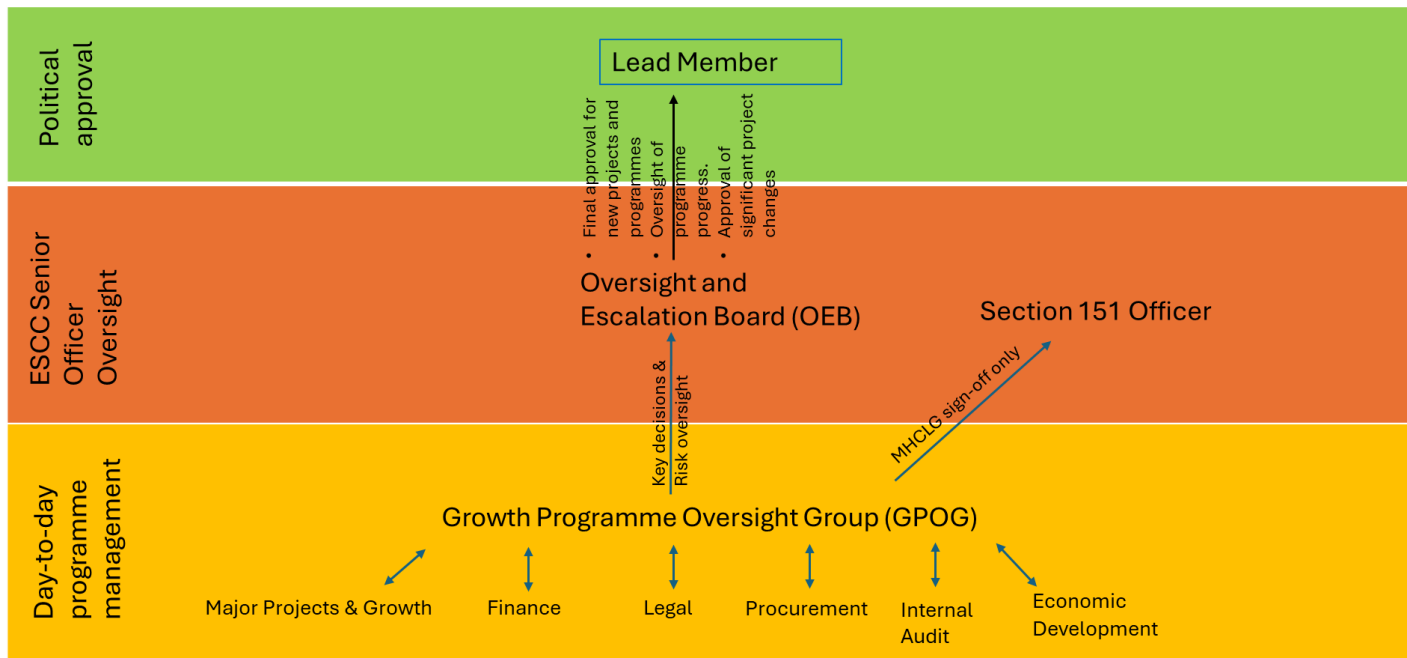
Step 4	Major Projects and Growth / Finance	Review returned data.
Step 5	Finance	Reconcile financial information to accounting system
Step 6	Major Projects and Growth	Request sign off from GPOG
Step 7	GPOG	Sign-off both outputs and financials
Step 8	Major Projects and Growth	Request S151 sign off
Step 9	S151	Sign off
Step 10	Major Projects and Growth	Submit to Government
Step 11	Major Projects and Growth & Economic Development	Inform TES via quarterly updates
Step 12	Major Projects and Growth	Members informed via 6 monthly report

3.5 Other reporting processes

Any further reporting processes, such as public questions, FOI responses, internal audits etc, will follow existing County Council processes.

4. Appendices

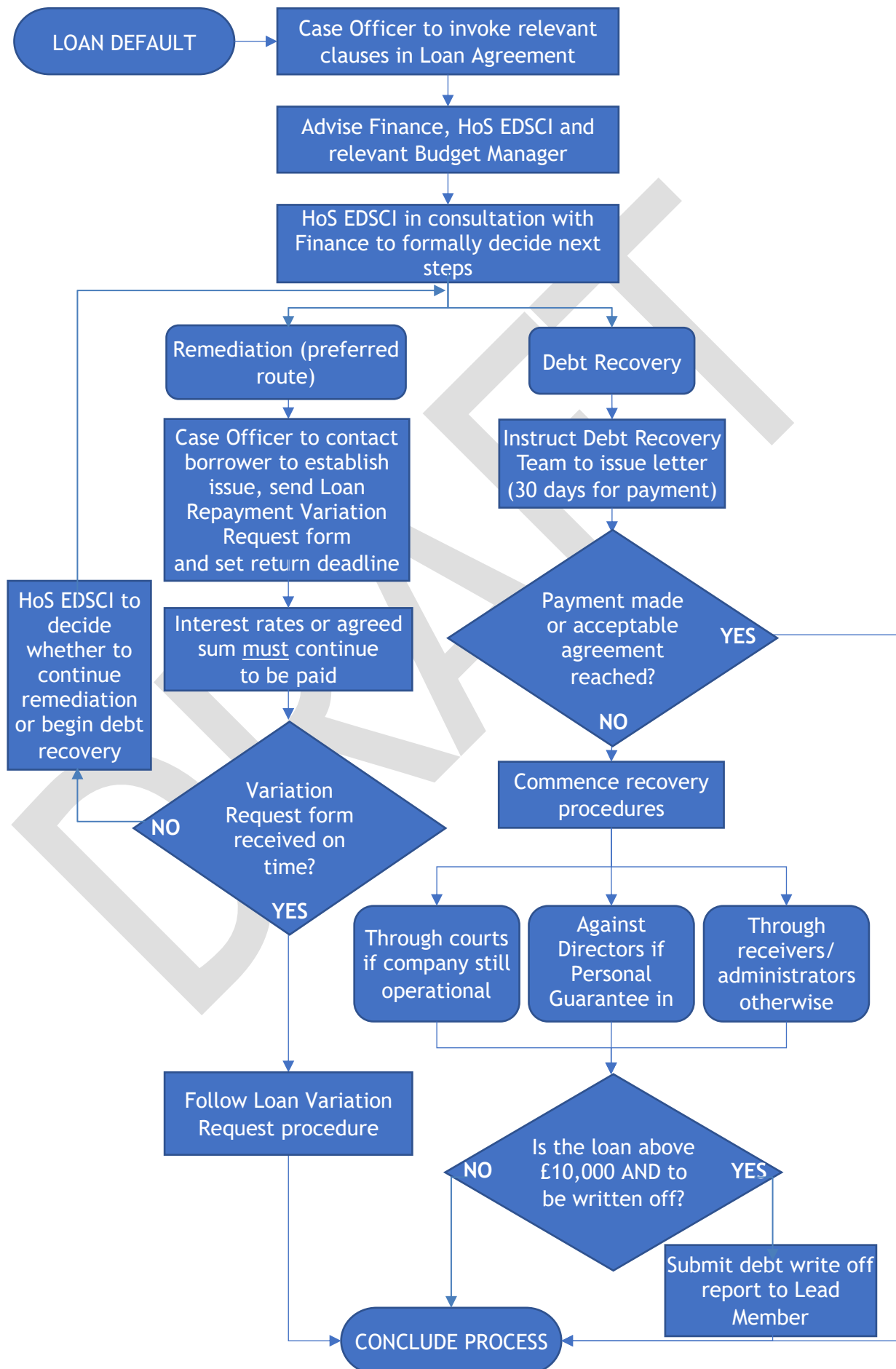
4.1 Governance flowchart



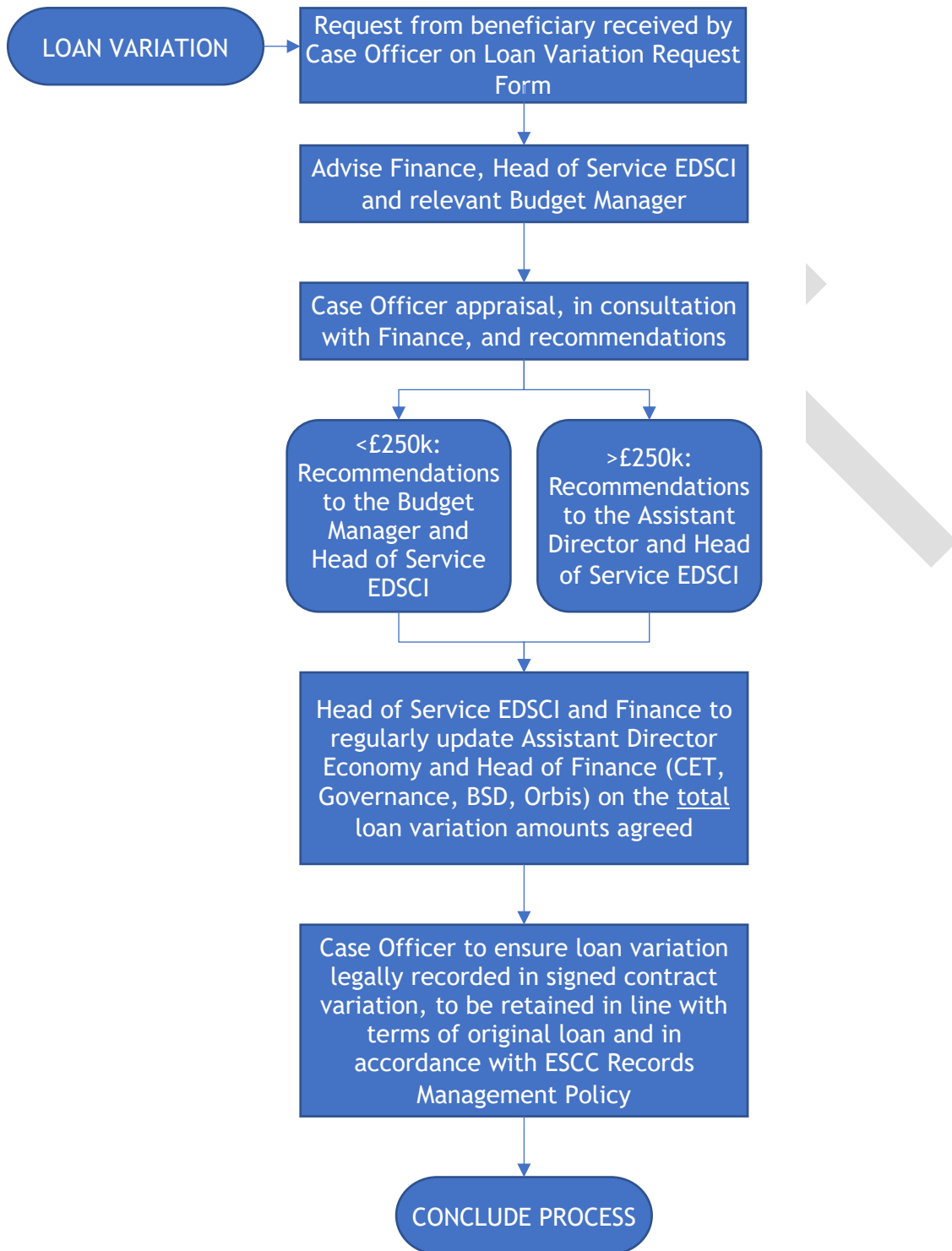
See Table 1 in Section 2.2 for more detail of responsibilities

4.2 Loan Default & Variation process maps

Loan default process (taken from Communities Economy and Transport (CET) Loan Variation and Loan Default Statement and Framework)



Loan variation process (taken from Communities Economy and Transport (CET) Loan Variation and Loan Default Statement and Framework)

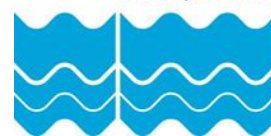


4.3 Oversight & Escalation Board Terms of Reference

East Sussex County Council

Local Growth Assurance Framework - Oversight and Escalation Board

East Sussex
County Council



Terms of Reference

Introduction

Following the closure of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) by UK Government in 2024 and the transition of local functions to upper tier local authorities, the County Council has developed a new Local Growth Assurance Framework to provide local scrutiny, checks, balances and accountability to the public and to the UK Government on legacy and new local growth projects and programmes.

In order to give strategic direction and decision-making powers, a senior officer group - the Oversight and Escalation Board (OEB) - has been established. The board will be chaired by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport.

1. Purpose of the Oversight and Escalation Board

The OEB provides the accountability structure for decision-making and approval of funding. It is responsible for taking appropriate decisions on legacy SELEP projects as well as for any appropriate future funding schemes in line with the County Council's corporate funding protocol and is responsible for the sign-off of all funding decisions.

The board will have responsibility for the following key activities:

- Approve any project deadline extensions.
- Approving project change requests - changes to budget up to £250,000.
- Endorse business cases submitted by external partners or internal ESCC bids during funding calls, subject to final Lead Member approval.
- Decide approach to funding call governance/approvals process if externally set timescales would not allow sufficient time to follow the approach set out in the East Sussex Local Growth Assurance Framework.
- Endorse recommendation on legacy SELEP project closures (subject to Lead Member confirmation).
- Providing steer and/or authorising approach to resolve any disputes / issues referred by the Growth Programme Oversight Group (GPOG)
- Taking any strategic decisions pertaining to the East Sussex Growth Hub and/or East Sussex Careers Hub

Additionally, the board can choose to escalate any decisions relating to the above to the appropriate Lead Member.

Accountability

The Project Board will be accountable to the Corporate Management Team and will report quarterly.

Chair, Membership and Quorum

The OEB will be chaired by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport, with the Assistant Director, Economy acting as deputy chair.

Membership of the Oversight and Escalation Board is:

- Chair: Director of Communities, Economy and Transport (Decision Maker);
- Deputy Chair: Assistant Director, Economy (Decision Maker);
- Section 151 Officer (Decision Maker);
- Head of Finance for Communities, Economy and Transport, BSD, and Governance (Advisor);
- Head of Service for Economic Development, Skills, Culture and Infrastructure (Advisor);
- Team Manager, Major Projects and Growth (Advisor)
- Solicitor (Advisor);
- Local Growth Programme Manager (Advisor);
- Team Manager, Economic Development (Advisor, as required);
- Team Manager, Employability & Skills (Advisor, as required)

Secretariat functions will be provided by the County Council's Major Projects and Growth Team. Officers from the Growth Programme Oversight Group may be invited to attend depending on the agenda items for discussion.

At least two of the decision-making members of the OEB, or suitable designated substitutes, must be present at a meeting to reach quorum. Any decisions reached must be made unanimously.

Meeting Frequency

Meetings of the OEB will be scheduled on a quarterly basis but if there are no decisions required the meeting can be replaced by a written update. The board may choose to convene additional meetings on an ad-hoc basis to take decisions that are time sensitive. Where appropriate, the board may also choose to reach a consensus on decisions by email, without the need to convene a meeting.

Meeting Structure

Agendas and reports should be circulated to all board members a minimum of 3 working days in advance of a meeting, but ideally 5 working days.

Minutes or a Decision and Action Log from the previous meeting will be circulated no later than 5 working days following a meeting.

Review of Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis.

4.4 Growth Programme Oversight Group Terms of Reference

East Sussex County Council

Local Growth Assurance Framework - Growth Programme Oversight Group



Terms of Reference

Introduction

Following the closure of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) by UK Government in 2024 and the transition of local functions to upper tier local authorities, the County Council has developed a new Local Growth Assurance Framework to provide local scrutiny, checks, balances and accountability to the public and to the UK Government on legacy and new local growth projects and programmes.

The Growth Programme Oversight Group (GPOG) has been established to provide day-to-day programme and project oversight. The group is designed to support timely, informed decision making for any programmes covered by the framework.

The group will be co-chaired by the Head of Service for Economic Development, Skills, Culture and Infrastructure and the Head of Finance for Communities, Economy and Transport, Business Services and Governance.

Purpose of the Growth Programme Oversight Group

GPOG provides the accountability structure for decision-making and approval of funding. It is responsible for taking appropriate decisions on legacy SELEP projects as well as for any appropriate future funding schemes in line with the County Council's corporate funding protocol.

The group will have responsibility for the following key activities:

- Oversight of new growth funding calls, including bidding and assessment, in the Economic Development, Skills, Culture and Infrastructure service area;
- Leading open funding calls and ensuring the calls are widely publicised;
- Identifying and escalating high-risk projects to the Oversight and Escalation Board (OEB);
- Ensuring that funding is used in line with grant agreements and that appropriate management controls are in place;
- Authorising monitoring for legacy SELEP projects;
- Analysis and proposal of legacy SELEP project closures;
- Ensuring the implementation of the Local Growth Assurance Framework;
- Coordinating reports as required;
- Championing successes within the county, including projects which should be recognised as innovative, or examples of best practice;

- Ensuring ongoing local engagement with the public as well as private and public sector partners to inform key decisions and set out how they will evidence effective engagement;
- Ensuring the transparency and accountability of decisions and recommendations.

Accountability

The GPOG will be accountable to the Local Growth Assurance Framework Oversight and Escalation Board (OEB).

Any potential issues that cannot be resolved by the group are escalated to the OEB.

Final decisions and recommendations are ratified by the OEB with appropriate Lead Member approval as required.

Chair and Membership

The GPOG will be co-chaired by:

- Head of Service for Economic Development, Skills, Culture and Infrastructure; and
- Head of Finance for Communities, Economy and Transport, Business Services and Governance.

If either cannot attend a meeting the other may act as chair on their own.

Membership of the GPOG is:

- Head of Service for Economic Development, Skills, Culture and Infrastructure (Decision Maker);
- Head of Finance for Communities, Economy and Transport, Business Services and Governance (Decision Maker);
- Team Manager - Major Projects & Growth (Decision Maker);
- Local Growth Programme Manager (Advisor);
- Solicitor (Advisor);
- Principal Finance Officer (Advisor)

Secretariat functions will be provided by the County Council's Major Projects and Growth Team, who will have no decision-making authority. Other officers from across the Council may be asked to attend depending on the agenda items for discussion, on a meeting by meeting basis.

Meeting Frequency

Meetings of the group will be scheduled on a monthly basis but if there are no decisions required the meeting can be replaced by a written update or cancelled. The group may choose to convene additional meetings on an ad-hoc basis in order to address decisions that are time sensitive.

Meeting Structure

Agendas and reports should be circulated to all board members a minimum of 3 working days in advance of a meeting, but ideally 5 working days.

Minutes or a Decision and Action Log from the previous meeting will be circulated no later than 5 working days following a meeting.

Review of Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed on an annual basis.

DRAFT