

Wiltshire Council

Council

26 February 2019

From Councillor Ian Thorn, Calne Central Division

To Councillor Pauline Church, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and South Wiltshire Recovery

Question (19-24)

What safeguards are being put in place to retain democratic accountability when the Swindon and Wiltshire LEP becomes a private limited company?

Response

The 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in England have public responsibility in exercising how they spend government funds. To underpin this, the government ensures each LEP adheres to the **National Assurance Framework** https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/567528/161109_LEP_Assurance_Framework.pdf

– this makes sure LEPs have in place robust systems and processes to effectively manage funding from central Government budgets. That framework stipulates specific rules for LEPs in four key areas:

- Governance and Decision Making
- Transparent decision making; including a conflicts and Register of Interests policy
- Accountable decision making
- Ensuring value for money and effective delivery

The responsibility for ensuring LEPs strictly adhere to this framework lies with the 'Section 151 Officer' in the partner local authority who are the accountable body for the LEP. It is their responsibility to sign off and certify each LEP's assurance framework each year, ensure it is being implemented, and that it meets the standards of the LEP National Assurance Framework. This is case for all LEP's regardless of their structure. Ministers expect Local Enterprise Partnerships to follow the principles that apply to Government and Local Authorities, which prevent public expenditure incurred in retaining the services of lobbyists to influence public officials, Members of Parliament, political parties or the Government to take a particular view on any issue.

Each year MHCLG meets with the Chair and Director of the LEP and the Section 151 Officer to review their Governance and performance of the LEP.

Details of the SWLEP's Governance Framework can be found here: <https://swlep.co.uk/about/governance>

Copies of the Governance Compliance and Assurance Statements to HM
Government can be found here:
<https://swlep.co.uk/about/making-decisions>