

REPORT TO: AUDIT COMMITTEE

DATE: 27 FEBRUARY 2020

REPORT TITLE: WOE LOCAL GROWTH ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

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Purpose of Report

- 1 To inform the committee of the West of England Local Growth Assurance Framework which is an overarching document that governs the allocation of WECA and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) growth funding.

Recommendation

- To review, and note, the West of England Local Growth Assurance Framework (as detailed in Appendix 1).

Background / Issues for Consideration

- 2 Government have set out in The National Local Growth Assurance Framework guidance the requirement for LEPs and Mayoral Combined Authorities in receipt of a Single Pot to produce their own local assurance framework. This document sets out the West of England's governance arrangements for these funds, how due transparency and accountability are ensured and the way that schemes are appraised, monitored and evaluated to achieve value for money.
 - 2.1 The 'Single Pot' approach to funding is a significant fiscal agreement in devolution deals which seeks to reduce ring fences and consolidate funding lines for which WECA is the accountable body. The West of England Operating Framework and Business Plan together with the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and other West of England plans and strategies, provide the basis for investment decisions alongside the delivery of statutory requirements, conditions of funding and other local transport objectives.
 - 2.2 The WoE Local Growth Assurance Framework has been approved through the WECA Committee with the most recent version updated in November 2019, approved by Committee on 31 January 2020.

2.3 The funds within scope of this framework are:

- Investment Fund;
- Transforming Cities Fund;
- Adult Education Budget;
- Economic Development Fund;
- Local Growth Fund;
- Revolving Infrastructure Fund;
- South West Energy Hub

Consultation

3 The Local Growth Assurance Framework has been shared with Unitary Authority Chief Executives and Section 151 Officers as well as the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership prior to WECA committee approval.

3.1 The Framework has also been shared with government.

Other Options Considered

4 Different assurance frameworks could have been drafted for WECA funding separate from LEP funding but it was considered that benefit would be obtained from one fully integrated, over-arching framework.

Risk Management/Assessment

5 Having a clear and transparent governance framework for the approval, monitoring and management of regional funding approvals is a vital tool in ensuring value for money and effective risk management.

Public Sector Equality Duties

6 The public sector equality duty created under the Equality Act 2010 means that public authorities must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

6.1 The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

- 6.2 The general equality duty therefore requires organisations to consider how they could positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations. It requires equality considerations to be reflected in the design of policies and the delivery of services, including policies, and for these issues to be kept under review.
- 6.3 The authority's key financial documents can be made available in different formats and / or languages, as required, in order to improve ease of access.

Finance Implications, including economic impact assessment where appropriate:

- 7 The Local Growth Assurance Framework promotes the achievement of value for money from the prioritisation and distribution of limited financial resources.

Advice given by: Malcolm Coe, Director of Investment and Corporate Services

Legal Implications:

- 8 The publication, and audit, of the Authority's Financial Statements is in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations (England) 2015. The adoption of an assurance framework will ensure that robust governance processes underpin funding allocations.

Advice given by: Shahzia Daya, Director of Legal Services

Climate Change Implications

- 9 On 19 July 2019, the West of England Combined Authority declared a climate emergency, recognising the huge significance of climate change and its impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of the region's residents. The Combined Authority is committed to taking climate change considerations fully into account as an integral part of its governance and decision making process.

Each report/proposal submitted for Combined Authority / Joint Committee approval is assessed in terms of the following:

Will the proposal impact positively or negatively on:

- * The emission of climate changing gases?
- * The region's resilience to the effects of climate change?
- * Consumption of non-renewable resources?
- * Pollution to land, water or air?

Particular projects will also be subject to more detailed environmental assessment/consideration as necessary as part of their detailed project-specific management arrangements

- 9.1 Positive contribution to regional climate change is a key element within the assessment criteria used for prioritising projects for investment funding.

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – West of England Local Growth Assurance Framework November 2019.

Background papers:**West of England Combined Authority Contact:**

Any person seeking background information relating to this item should seek the assistance of the contact officer for the meeting who is Ian Hird / Tim Milgate on 0117 332 1486; or by writing to West of England Combined Authority, 3 Rivergate, Temple Way, Bristol BS1 6ER; email: democratic.services@westofengland-ca.gov.uk