

Governance Assurance Annual Statement 2019

As an organisation that is both funded by and responsible for the distribution of public funds, robust and transparent governance is essential. We have strong systems in place to ensure that we apply the highest standards of governance, supported by our accountable body, the North East Combined Authority (NECA). We take seriously the importance of delivering our responsibilities as a Local Enterprise Partnership through compliance with Government best practice guidelines and in accordance with our own operating principles and standards detailed in our Local Assurance Framework that sets out how we make decisions and ensure value for money when we invest in projects across the North East LEP area. Importantly, this document also sets out how we communicate and publish information to the public about our affairs such as our annual accounts, with the latest accounts being able to be viewed [HERE](#) on the our accountable body's website. The NECA 573 Chief Finance Officer arranged for the external audit of our 2017/18 accounts and these have been confirmed as being in good order.

The North East Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) 2014-2024 has continued to guide our investment programmes and in the past year we have developed a SEP evaluation strategy and appointed external consultants to help us assess and evaluate the progress that we are making towards our core goal to help create 100,000 additional jobs in the North East over this period. Over the past year we have added to our website details and progress updates on each project that we have provided with funding. We have also sought to keep all interested partners and members of the public up to date through regular email bulletins which go to 2,500 subscribers. We welcome more people to sign up for our newsletters and to keep in touch with the activities of the North East LEP and its partners, this can easily be done through our website [HERE](#).

The North East LEP has continued to receive strong support from the NECA and its constituent local authorities and during the year we have also established close working relationships with the newly formed North of Tyne Combined Authority. Working closely and effectively with both Combined Authorities in the North East will be very important going forward as we prepare our Local Industrial Strategy and SEP action plan for the period to 2021.

The NECA committees perform an important democratic role in being able to review our activities and to hold the LEP to public account. Both the NECA Governance and Overview and Scrutiny Committee's receive updates on our activities and can review planned key decisions. These committee meetings

and the NECA North East Leadership Board are public meetings and Board papers can be viewed [HERE](#). The Monitoring Officer at NECA has supported the LEP Executive Team providing advice and training on good governance and decision-making. The Monitoring Officer role is to ensure that we have robust and transparent governance arrangements and importantly that we operate legally with clear policies and procedures on such matters as complaints and whistle blowing for instance. All Board members complete declaration of interest forms and due care is taken to ensure that correct procedures are followed when there is a potential conflict, and this is reflected in the minutes of Board meetings. Board minutes and the register of Board member interests are published on our website [HERE](#).

We continue to enjoy strong relationships with business representative groups and hold regular senior level meetings with the North East England Chamber of Commerce, Confederation of British Industry (CBI), Federation of Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs Forum.

We held a range of public engagement events during 2018 including a formal launch event attended by 300 businesses for our new Scale Up North East Programme, an 'Our Economy' research briefing event and consultations on the development of a work programme for the next phase of SEPs implementation from 2019-21.

In July 2018 Government published a strategic review of LEPs in England 'Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships' in which it set out consistent standards and expectations in relation to governance and transparency and importantly, gave LEPs a lead role in developing and taking forward Local Industrial Strategies. The North East LEP welcomes this national report and has taken actions, where required, to ensure that we remain fully compliant with the latest government good governance standards and guidelines.

Chair, Andrew Hodgson

Date: 1st February 2019

Chief Executive, Helen Golightly

Date 1st February 2019

