



Governance and Assurance Framework

Section E: Assurance Framework

June 2021

Purpose and Strategic priorities

1. The purpose and strategic priorities of Midlands Engine are set out in the Governance and Assurance Framework, Section A: Purpose and Governance Principles.

Geography and membership

2. The Midlands Engine covers the geographical area of its constituent top tier local authorities and West Midlands Combined Authority. Membership comprises these authorities, the corresponding Local Enterprise Partnerships, Businesses and Universities within the defined geography.

Executive Board

Statement of purpose

3. The primary role of the ME Executive Board is to provide leadership and accountability to the Midlands Engine Partnership to ensure the delivery of the Midlands Engine vision and action plan.
4. To maximise the opportunities for growth in the Midlands; support and oversee effective collaborative effort; determine the strategy of Midlands Engine and oversee its implementation. It is the decision-making body of the Midlands Engine and therefore acts as its key leadership and accountable board.

Membership

5. The Executive Board comprises a number of representatives from the Midlands Engine Partnership who are nominated from the wider ME Partnership Forum as set out in the Board Recruitment Policy – Section K.

Terms of reference

6. The key functions of the ME Executive Board are to:
 - a) Provide leadership and accountability to the Midlands Engine partnership
 - b) Define strategy and to oversee progress of the action plan by directing the Operating Board
 - c) Make decisions in terms of setting annual delivery plans, budgets and governance
 - d) Ensure transparency in the Midlands Engine Programme
 - e) Maximise visibility and promote the work of the Midlands Engine at national and international levels
 - f) Receive reports, papers and recommendations from the ME Operating Board

Accountability

7. An Independent Chair will chair the Executive Board. It will be based on collaborative working and conducted in the spirit of partnership working. All decisions will be made in accordance with the following principles:

- a) Due consultation will be carried out where appropriate (including taking relevant professional advice from officers)
- b) There will be a presumption in favour of open and transparent decision-making
- c) There will be a clarity of aims and desired outcomes
- d) All decisions will be taken as the financially accountable democratically elected members of the Midlands Engine Partnership and not on behalf of specific areas.
- e) Members of the Executive Board are required to declare any interests, gifts or hospitality, which they have or receive which could influence any decisions they may make as board members.

Meetings

8. General rules are as follows:

- a) The ME Executive Board will meet on a quarterly basis
- b) Any meeting cannot be held without the attendance of the Independent Chair and no member can deputise for this position.
- c) Meetings will be consensus based and will include detailed discussions of matters that are of strategic importance. However, in the event that consensus cannot be reached, decisions shall be resolved as outlined in paragraph 11. of the Constitution
- d) Meetings will be quorate when 2/3rds of the members attend.

Operating Board

Statement of purpose

9. The purpose of the ME Operating Board is to manage the work programme taking forward the recommendations of the Executive Board; provide strategic support and advice in the development and delivery of the Midlands Core Areas of Focus; provide expertise and support to the Midlands Engine secretariat and budget and expenditure monitoring.

Membership

10. The ME Operating Board comprises a number of senior representatives from the Midlands Engine Partnership as defined and agreed by the Executive Board.

Terms of reference

11. The Midlands Engine Operating Board will:

- a) Provide expertise and recommendations to the Midlands Engine Executive Board.
- b) Co-ordinate and monitors progress against the delivery of ME approved delivery plan and budget.

- c) Capitalise on any business and regeneration opportunities available to support the delivery of Midlands Engine.
- d) Be the main point of engagement in relation to strategic issues for relevant Government Departments and delivery agencies.
- e) Take operational decisions on the content and direction of the Midlands Engine work programme supported by advice from programme and advisory groups and in line with decisions taken by the Midlands Engine Executive Board.
- f) Ensures effective co-ordination between the various programme and advisory groups.

Accountability

12. The ME Executive Board will nominate the Chair of the Operating Board. This will be reviewed every two years. It will be based on collaborative working and conducted in the spirit of partnership working. Meetings will be consensus based and will include detailed discussions of matters that are of strategic importance.

13. All decisions will be made in accordance with the following principles:

- a) Due consultation will be carried out where appropriate (including taking relevant professional advice from officers)
- b) There will be a presumption in favour of open and transparent decision-making
- c) There will be a clarity of aims and desired outcomes
- d) All decisions will be taken as the financially accountable democratically elected members of the Midlands Engine Partnership and not on behalf of specific areas
- e) Members of the Operating Board are required to declare any interests, gifts or hospitality, which they have or receive which could influence any decisions they may make as board members.

Meetings

14. General rules are as follows:

- a) The Operating Board will meet every two months
- b) The basis of decisions will be by a vote of a majority
- c) Meetings will be quorate when 2/3rds of the membership attend.

Diversity

15. The Midlands Engine Partnership is committed to meeting its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. In devising policy and taking decisions, Midlands Engine will take due regard of the Equality Duty to:

- a) eliminate unlawful discrimination
- b) advance equality of opportunity
- c) foster good relations.

16. Midlands Engine recognises its role to advance equality, and in particular acknowledges the nine protected characteristics. Midlands Engine will meet its obligations by working to understand how its policies and decisions affect people differentiated by age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. It will actively take steps to reduce any discrimination of people or communities with these characteristics, by using all reasonable endeavours to:
- a) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
 - b) Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people;
 - c) Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
17. Staffordshire County Council, in acting as Midlands Engine’s Accountable Body also has a duty to ensure that any steps that Midlands Engine ought to take in promoting equality and tackling discrimination and obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act, are taken.
18. Furthermore, the Midlands Engine Board will seek to engage with businesses which vary in size and which operate in a wide range of sectors including ME priority sectors. The ME will work with its partners to engage with the wider business community through various routes including the Midlands Engine Business Council and Midlands Engine Business Forum.

Programme and Risk Management

19. The Midlands Engine Programme will be managed using accepted programme management principles. The Executive Director has overall responsibility for programme management to the Midlands Engine Executive Board and the Cities and Local Growth Unit. Project level risk registers will be developed for discrete project activity managed by the Midlands Engine Risk Sub – group. A strategic level risk register and accompanying risk management strategy will be utilised and form part of the monitoring reports to Cities and Local Growth Unit.