



**SOLENT
LOCAL
ENTERPRISE
PARTNERSHIP**

**Equality, Diversity
and Inclusion Policy**

2022/23



TOGETHER.STRONGER



Foreword

The Solent is home to a diverse economy and our Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) aims to set the Solent area on a pathway to more prosperous future for all.

As a partnership organisation, the LEP itself was founded in the belief that our local community and area is Together Stronger.

Inclusivity has therefore always been a central principle to our organisation and, building on this long-standing approach, the Solent LEP Board have formalised their commitment to this through the appointment of a Diversity Champion.

I am honoured to take on this role and, on behalf of the Board, am delighted to be able to set out how we are embracing diversity as an essential component in the way we work.

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy sets out our three-point plan to embracing diversity, focussed on;

- Our Leadership and Partnerships
- Our Communities
- Our Staff

Ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion across all three areas is fundamentally important to strengthening the work of the LEP. These values ensure our partnership remains both representative and fair as well as ensuring we can celebrate difference and secure a diverse range of views and ideas.

This approach is critical if we are to continue to innovate in the delivery of new strategies, services and investments for the benefit of the area as a whole.

We are opposed to all forms of unlawful, unfair and inappropriate discrimination.

In this spirit of inclusivity and continual improvement, we would welcome any feedback on this policy and will use this to inform its future development.

Jo Sawford

Solent LEP Diversity Champion

Chair of Solent LEP Search, Employment and Remuneration Committee





Our Leadership and Partnerships

Values

The Solent LEP Board have established a set of core values which underpin all the work that we do. Embracing diversity as an essential component in the way we work is a core value of our approach.



SOLENT
LOCAL
ENTERPRISE
PARTNERSHIP

CORE VALUES

	S upport	We Support businesses to grow, individuals to succeed and communities to flourish
	O pen	We are Open , transparent and honest and work without bias, ensuring that an evidence-based approach drives our decision-making
	L eadership	We lead by example and value Leadership which is ambitious, fair and objective
	E mbrace	We Embrace diversity as an essential component in the way we work
	N urture	We Nurture the talent, innovation and creativity of those we work with
	T eamwork	We believe trust and mutual respect are essential for Teamwork and collaboration

Board Diversity

The Solent LEP is committed to having a Board which embraces diversity and promotes equality of opportunity within the Solent economy. In particular, the Solent LEP is committed to improving the gender balance on our board. We have achieved our aim that women make up at least one third of the board by 2020 and we are now committed to achieving equal representation by 2023.

In addition to our focus on gender balance, the Solent LEP is also committed to ensuring our approach to Board diversity includes consideration of other protected characteristics, and is reflective of the business demography of the Solent economy. This includes, but is not limited to, endeavouring to secure greater representation from younger entrepreneurs and business leaders from non-white ethnic backgrounds. We will monitor the make-up of our Board to ensure that we can secure input from across



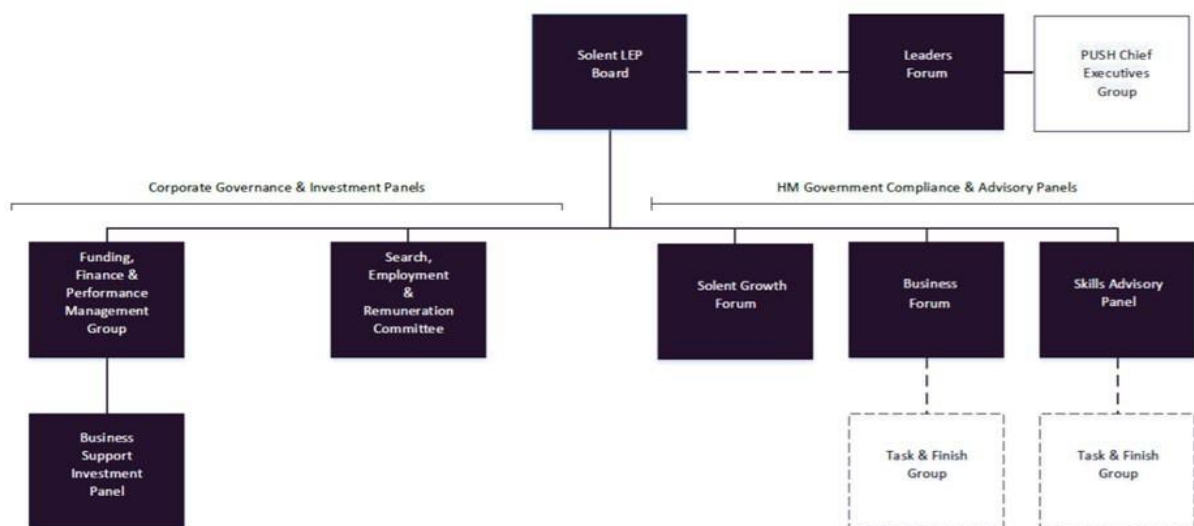


all areas of our geography and access expertise from a diverse mix of industries and sectors that are reflective of our economy. We are also committed to ensuring strong Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) representation on our Board. Alongside ensuring that there is always direct SME involvement in the work of the LEP at Board level, the Board have appointed an SME Champion to lead our engagement with the SME community and ensure all SMEs have a route through which to engage.

These principles will inform all future LEP Board recruitment and will be considered in the context of both eligibility criteria as well as the promotion of opportunities to join the Board. In addition, recognising that there are a limited number of seats on the Solent LEP Board, the Solent LEP will also utilise its option to co-opt¹ additional advisors with specialist knowledge in order to ensure that the Board can enhance its ability to access a diversity of views in Board discussions.

Panel and Forum Diversity

The Solent LEP has established a range of advisory and decision making panels and forum, all of which make an extremely valuable contribution the work of the LEP.



Similar to our approach to Board diversity, the LEP reviews all our Panels and Forum and the learning from this, alongside the principles set out in relation to Board recruitment, are used to inform future Panel recruitment.

Conduct

¹ In line with the HM Government Local Growth Assurance Framework, the LEP Board have the option to co-opt an additional five advisors with specialist knowledge on a one year basis, unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Solent LEP require any co-opted members to adhere to the standards that all permanent LEP Board Members are required to adopt, for example, they must act in line with the Nolan Principles and declare any conflicts of interests.





We have established a Code of Conduct to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. We expect that all our Board Directors and Solent LEP Representatives sign-up to, and act in accordance with our Code of Conduct. This includes Chairs and Members of panels and forum of the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership, Section 151 Officers and Chief Executive Officers of any accountable body organisation operating on behalf of the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership and any other persons with significant influence over the activities of the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership - for example, Solent LEP staff and senior points of contact at accountable body organisations such as legal and financial contacts.

This Code is based on the Nolan principles² which are entirely consistent with the principles of our equality and diversity policy. In line with these principles, we expect our representatives to always act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

We have also established an enquiry, complaints and whistleblowing policy to enable any individual to report any perceived wrongdoing within the LEP, including something they believe goes against the core values of Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Principles) and the Code of Conduct for LEP Board Members and staff.

Advocacy and Co-ordination

The Solent LEP has a key advocacy and co-ordination role in supporting the development and delivery of a Local Industrial Strategy for our area. This requires collaborating with a wide-range of local partners to act as an informed and independent voice for the Solent.

We listen, engage and champion our local people, from all parts of our area and regardless of their location or background. We work without bias and ensure an evidence based approach drives our decision making, investments and everything we do. We aim to secure the widest possible benefit of our work; targeting activity in those areas with greatest need and those opportunities with the greatest potential.

We will apply our principles relating to equality and diversity in our role as an advocate for the area, both with regard to the local people, communities and organisations with which we engage; and through ensuring that we pro-actively consider diversity in the public activity we undertake; including spokespeople we identify on behalf of the area and business leaders we engage in our programmes.

Monitoring

² Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, Leadership





The Solent LEP is committed to continuous improvement in all that we do.

Our Search, Employment and Remuneration Committee (SERCOM) monitors diversity across our Board and is appointed to lead the process for all employment matters including, but not limited to, organisational structure, appointments and executive remuneration within the overall budget approved by the Board in order that there is a formal and transparent procedure for developing employment policy. The remit of the group has been broadened to include both an executive and non-executive search function which will provide expert advice on the recruitment of senior executive and non-executive expertise. SERCOM publish a report on their activity on an annual basis.

The Solent LEP is now beginning to gather additional data from businesses who contact us - to help us analyse our business support process holistically and implement actions that promote diversity and inclusiveness. While optional, we encourage those who contact us to provide this information to help us achieve our goal of providing an inclusive package of business support.

Our Communities

Strategy

In our role as the key interface and lead for economic development in the Solent, the LEP is committed to meaningful and effective engagement with all partners and the general public. This has been central to the development of Solent 2050, which has been informed by wide-ranging consultation, in which the LEP has consulted with over 1,600 people and over 500 businesses. The LEP will continue to invest significant resource to engage with partners as the economic strategy and new funding and support programmes are developed. It should be noted that the wider governance architecture of the Solent LEP plays an important ongoing mechanism through which engagement takes place between the Solent LEP and its partners.

Building on our work to date, the Solent LEP will continue locally-led work in a range of areas, including: ensuring priorities are based on objective evidence, engaging with local stakeholders to build focused sets of priorities; and ensuring local ambitions are aligned to national strategy.

We are committed to engaging openly with all communities in the Solent and will ensure that there are a range of opportunities through which individuals and organisations can engage including online and in-person. This includes securing bespoke engagement with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors. Accessibility will form a key consideration in the organisation of all our consultation, and we will also ensure that all LEP publications are made available in an accessible format.





Allocation of Funds

In formulating proposals, the Solent LEP is very mindful of the obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and in particular the impact of any proposals on groups with protected characteristics. In accordance with the processes and procedures of our accountable body, Portsmouth City Council, the LEP have adopted the use of an Integrated Impact Assessment ("IIA", formerly the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)) Toolkit.

Integrated Impact Assessments enable the LEP to ensure equality and diversity is considered in relation to any decisions relating to project funding. In addition to consideration at the point of a funding decision, as part of work to develop individual projects in advance of delivery, all scheme leads are required to undertake an IIA, which will also form part of the LEP's assessment prior to awarding funding.

In addition to ensuring that LEP funded projects do not have a negative impact on groups with protected characteristics, we are also keen to invest in projects that unlock new opportunities for a wide variety of individuals and communities. It is our ambition to explore the creation of a digital skills fund which will boost the diversity of people working in digital and technology jobs.

Our Staff

Employment

The Solent LEP has established a Search, Employment and Remuneration Committee (SERCOM) to lead the process for all employment matters including, but not limited to, organisational structure, appointments and executive remuneration within the overall budget approved by the Board in order that there is a formal and transparent procedure for developing employment policy.

Currently Portsmouth City Council act as the Accountable body for Solent LEP and in this role employ the staff who work as part of the LEP Executive. SERCOM keep under review, on behalf of the Board of Solent LEP, the LEP's employment strategy ensuring efficient and effective recruitment, development and deployment of the LEP's staff resources, role descriptions and the on-going development of the LEP staff. This includes annual review of the Council's Pay Policy Statement and decisions in relation to adoption of this policy.

As an employer, the Solent LEP is committed to equality and valuing diversity within its workforce and operates in-line with the Equality and Diversity Strategy of our accountable body. Our goal is to ensure that these commitments, reinforced by our





values, are embedded in our day-to-day working practices with all our customers, colleagues and partners.

As staff of Portsmouth City Council all Solent LEP staff work under pay and conditions set out and agreed by Portsmouth City Council. Their pay policy statement is produced in accordance with Sections 38 to 43 of the Localism Act 2011 (the Act), and is compliant with the Local Government Transparency Code 2014.

The pay policy for Solent LEP staff has conformed fully with the wider pay policy for Portsmouth City Council Staff and the Council's job evaluation support scheme has been used when setting pay levels for roles within the Solent LEP.

All our recruitment and human resources policies are designed to be compliant with existing legislation and ensure that discriminatory practices are avoided.

We support the wellbeing of our employees and provide information and advice to support the health of the workforce.

We operate in accordance with the flexible working policy of Portsmouth City Council which helps us respond to the needs of employees in balancing their commitment to work with their life outside of work. The policy helps develop and maintain a committed, loyal and healthier workforce and to further facilitate the achievement of equality.

An employee opinion survey is conducted on an annual basis across the whole of our accountable body's workforce to provide feedback on a range of aspects. This is analysed across the protected characteristics of age, sex, ethnicity and disability.

Under Specific Duties introduced in 2011 as part of the Equality Act 2010, the council has a legal obligation to publish equality information relating to its employees on an annual basis. The council currently monitors the diversity of its workforce with relation to age, sex, disability and race as well as gender pay gap.

Further information in relation to our pay policy is available at: <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/your-council/transparency/senior-management-salary-information>

Training

Utilising the systems in place through our accountable body, we ensure that all employees and managers undertake appropriate equalities and diversity training, proportionate to their role and level of responsibility. A range of management development programmes are provided to ensure that all managers have the opportunity to develop effective communication and leadership skills and value diversity within the workplace.





In addition, the Solent LEP has established a successful apprenticeship scheme which we look to promote broadly across all communities in the Solent. This programme has helped us to secure more diverse input into our work and forms a core component of our commitment to improving work opportunities at the Solent LEP.

In order to ensure continued best practice, Solent LEP Directors are also provided with independent non-executive development on a regular basis.

Contact

For any enquiries or to provide any feedback in relation to this policy, please contact us at:

Via Email

info@solentlep.org.uk

By Phone

02392 688924

