

**STOKE-ON-TRENT AND STAFFORDSHIRE  
LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP  
Note of a Board Meeting held on the  
14 December 2011**

**The Octagon Boardroom, Staffordshire University, Weston Road, Stafford**

**Present**

Maitland Hyslop	(Internet Central) - Chair
Ken Stepney	(JCB)
Sue Prince	(Beechenhill Farm)
Ron Dougan	(Trent and Dove Housing)
Kerry Diamond	(Zytek)
Stephen Dixon	(Johnson Tiles)
Paul Richards	(Staffs. University – representing the University Sector)
Mohammed Pervez	(Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council)
John Van de Laarschot	(Chief Executive, Stoke-on-Trent City Council)
Brian Edwards	(Leader, South Staffordshire Council)
Philip Atkins	(Leader, Staffordshire County Council)
Nick Bell	(Chief Executive, Staffordshire County council)

**University/Further Education Observers**

Jenny Tucker	(Keele University)
Steve Willis	(Stafford College)

**Observers / In attendance**

Cllr Ben Adams	(Staffordshire County Council)
Catherine Raines	(Staffordshire County Council)
Cllr Alan White	(Lichfield District Council representing Mike Wilcox)
Cllr Greg Hall	(East Staffordshire Borough Council)
Cllr Gordon Alcott	(Cannock Chase Council)
Bob Philips	(Cannock Chase Council)
Darryl Evers	(Staffordshire County Council)
Jeremy Herbert	(Staffordshire County Council)

**Advisory/Secretariat**

Peter Davenport	(Staffordshire County Council)
Alison Knight	(Stoke-on-Trent City Council)
Sara Williams	(North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce)

1. **Introductions**

The chair welcomed all guests and visitors.

2. **Apologies**

Peter Coates	(Bet365)
Mark Kerrigan	(Alton Towers)
Stephen Sweeney	(Leader, Newcastle Borough Council)
Sybil Ralphs	(Leader, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council)
Mike Wilcox	(Leader, Lichfield District Council)
Kevin Postones	(BIS - Local)
Mark Meredith	(Stoke-on-Trent City Council)
Hardial Bhogal	(Stoke-on-Trent City Council)
Steve Burrows	(Staffordshire County Council)

3. **Declarations of Interest**

There were none declared. The Chair asked those members who hadn't yet done so to complete the requisite form as soon as possible.

#### 4. **Notes of the meeting held on 20 October and Matters Arising**

The notes were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

##### **Matters Arising**

###### Page 3 European Funding

- Broadband - Nick Bell reported back that we are progressing discussions on extending the coverage of the ERDF programme. If this is successful it was possible that up to £1.5m may be available for this area. The interested Local Authorities have met and are discussing who will support the re-alignment of the programme.
- The ongoing role of the European Service was raised. This currently comprises the West Midlands European Service, which covers two areas, a small office in Brussels, and a team in Birmingham. West Midlands Councils are currently seeking support from Local Authorities and LEPs.
- A local proposal is being developed to support technical assistance under Priority 5 for the area.
- The Board also learnt that the Regional Finance Forum was also looking to access European funds. Kerry Diamond represents the LEP on this group.

It was agreed that Nick's efforts should be supported and that the support for the Brussels/WMES to be discussed further.

###### Education Trust

Ken Stepney reported that there had been a meeting on the 7th December. In principle the proposal looks promising but needed more work on aligning schools, colleges, and universities.

A meeting has been arranged with Cilla Snowball in January.

A response had now been received from Philip Cox.

#### 5. **Presentation - Home and Communities Agency – Anne Marie Simpson**

Anne Marie Simpson - Head of Midlands Central – Homes and Communities Agency – gave a presentation to the board on the work of the Agency.

The HCA has a range of programmes and programmes which support housing and economic regeneration. The value of Local Delivery Plans in bringing together priorities was highlighted. She highlighted the local priorities for the HCA of Stoke, and I54.

##### Discussion

- Affordable housing starts have declined due to the market
- The broader role of the HCA was welcomed and there was a view that the area was well placed to take advantage of this
- The expertise of HCA could assist in a number of areas and the offer to meet should be followed up.
- There was a balance to be struck between opportunity and need.
- The HCA could help local partners in identifying surplus Government Land. Work was already ongoing in considering other public sector assets.
- The importance of aligning strategies was emphasised.

##### **Action**

1. Local Delivery Plans to be reviewed
2. LEP to continue to develop a partnership with the HCA
3. Local Authorities to consider how priorities can be identified for working with HCA.

## **NON CONFIDENTIAL**

### 6. **For Decision**

#### 6(a) **Growing Places Fund**

The fund represents a major opportunity for the LEP to unlock stalled developments which deliver jobs and growth. Jobs being the key focus for the LEP.

The Board agreed a timetable and considered a draft of the Pre Qualification Questionnaire. This was agreed, subject to some amendments, and will be submitted on the 20<sup>th</sup> December.

The LEP has already received submissions for 27 projects and others are being received. These will be reviewed in January to provide a shortlist for the Board's consideration.

#### **Action**

1. PQQ agreed and Accountable Body to be identified by NB/JvdL
2. Chair and Chair of Land and Housing Sub Group to agree PQQ.
3. Process set out in Appendix 1 to be adopted.

#### 6(b) **Possible Re-Focusing of Sub Groups**

The Chair sought the views of the lead Board members on the benefit of merging some of the subgroups to bring the constituent activity that supports the "Red Carpet" together. In particular the Inward Investment, Business and Planning work.

#### **Action:**

1. Board members to consider and a discussion to be held at the next meeting

#### 6(c) **Sub Group Reports**

##### **Business Development Group** (Stephen Dixon)

The outlined brief and proposals for the single point of contact for business support were supported.

The discussion highlighted the following;

- There are a range of mechanisms; all LEP partners should direct inquiries to the contact point to get a complete picture of the need for the service.
- It's important that the delivery is not akin to the more complex call centre approaches.
- The focus should be on linking partner information, particularly in the public sector.
- Accountants/professional services will want to maintain contact with their client base.
- The approach involves Chambers across the area, and NSCCI have been working with the Birmingham Chamber.
- It was agreed that the customers for the Inward Investment; and business support offers would be different and two numbers were appropriate.

It was agreed that the description of the Chambers of Commerce should be amended.

## **Action**

1. Brief to be implemented taking into account the above comments.

## **Inward Investment Group** (Paul Richards)

A working draft of the Business Plan for the Inward Investment Team was discussed. This identified a number of activities and targets for the team with the aim of raising our profile as an investment location, to directly target potential investors, develop relationships with key multipliers and engage with potential investors worldwide.

The Board were please to learn that the single point of contact was now in place, and that the team were working together at NSCCI and in Stafford. Inquiries will be managed across the whole team who will also work with other teams.

## Discussion

- Need to promote ourselves as a low risk area – across the spectrum of indicators.
- Understanding the baseline and context is important in measuring progress. For instance the experience of new business investors has been researched.
- A simplistic set of measures are needed – awareness, conversion rates, creating jobs is a key priority for City of Stoke-on-Trent who are seeking to invest in this area.
- Exporting was also an important area and members referred to the UK Ambassadors service, and the potential of the new UKTI contract.
- Need to work with exporting businesses as an introduction.
- The City MP's had hosted a successful event at the House of Commons which could form a useful model for the future.
- Also need to look at why people didn't invest in this area.

The Board welcomed the draft paper and asked that more work was done to highlight the areas aspirations.

## **Action:**

1. A further report/presentation should be made to the next meeting.

## **Branding and Communications** (Mark Kerrigan)

The LEP has had constructive discussions with neighbours, and many of the area's influential partners including MP's. The Board has been pleased with the supporting work by the County and City Council's Communication teams. One of the LEP's key objectives is the promote Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire.

To take this work forwards the LEP has agreed to retain a Marketing specialist and to develop a Board of Influence.

## **Action**

1. Marketing specialist to be commissioned
2. Board of Influence concept to be developed further
3. MP's and others to be encouraged to champion the LEP in a coordinated fashion. An event in London should be arranged.

### **Enterprise and Skills Group** (Ken Stepney)

A highly successful event on Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) event has been held at Alstom. The event showcased good practice from schools and employers. The LEP has agreed to work with the Vice Chancellor of Keele University who is developing the concept of an Educational Trust to bring together Schools, Colleges, Universities and Employers.

The LEP was pleased to support an initiative being developed by the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Apprenticeship group to increase the number of places available. This will promote STEM and high value technical skills apprenticeships.

#### **Action**

1. LEP to contribute to discussions on the Educational Trust.
2. NAS proposal to be supported.

### **Planning Group** (Sue Prince)

The LEP had been working with businesses and local planning colleagues to identify a number of outcomes that should form the basis of a "Charter Mark" approach. These are – Clarity and consistency, Effort and focus, Competence and respect, Accuracy and fairness, Dialogue and understanding.

The results of the workshop held at the end of October have been circulated and the Board agreed that it should be launched by the LEP and Local Authority partners in the new year.

#### **Action**

1. Charter Mark to be launched in February
2. Outcomes to be evaluated by the LEP planning group together with LPA and other partners.
3. Resource requirements to be considered after the meeting.

### **Broadband** (Sue Prince)

The team has been working hard to secure agreement with BDUK. A prospectus is being prepared to promote the funding options and ERDF funding is being sought. The Local Authorities have agreed to provide a letter of comfort to BDUK to ensure that we maintain momentum.

#### **Action**

1. Letter of Comfort to be provided to BDUK
2. LEP Board Members to advise team of any community or business led projects they were aware of.

### **Land and Housing** (Ron Dougan)

The Stewardship Panel had now met and the Board was pleased to see that the assets would be managed to deliver local benefits. This would be assisted by work to compile a database of site opportunities across the area.

Two events led by the Housing Associations are to be held in Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent. In addition a small event is planned with the Community and Voluntary sector.

#### **Action:**

1. Events to be supported

## **Funding** (Kerry Diamond)

The group has been developing thinking on a Growth and Risk Fund and a consultant has been retained. A presentation would be given to the January meeting. A series of Access to Finance events have been arranged and other funding routes are being investigated.

### 7. **For Discussion**

#### **Peak District and Rural Update**

The LEP is working with neighbouring LEP and Business Peak District on discussing how the potential of the Peak District can be maximised. As part of these discussions the potential for a Rural Growth Area is to be explored.

The opportunities presented by the Rural Growth Review are to be promoted to partners – <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/economy/>

The LEP and the County Council is working with Natural England on studying the relationship between the economy and the natural environment.

It was suggested that Rural issues needed to be covered during events.

#### **Action:**

1. The LEP to work with neighbouring LEP in arranging a discussion about how the potential of the Peak District is maximised.
2. A Rural Growth Area pilot is to be investigated as part of 1.
3. The Rural Growth Review Opportunities should be promoted to partners
4. The results of the work with Natural England should be reported to a future meeting.

### 8. **For Endorsement and Information**

None

### 9. **Any Other Non-Confidential Business**

- (a) German Energy Study Tour - The Chair reported back on his trip to Berlin to see how Germany was approaching this issue. The trip highlighted a wide range of opportunities that local business could exploit and the large scale of the initiatives in place in Germany to develop the industrial capacity it needed to eliminate its need for nuclear power.

The Chair highlighted the contrast between the approaches of the German and UK Governments. In particular the German approach to industrial planning and business development seemed to take a considerably more flexible view of EU requirements.

The Ceramics Industry is facing major challenges in this area.

Locally work on energy provision and renewables was a unique selling point.

- (b) The Chair had a constructive meeting with JLR which had covered its participation in the work of the Board.
- (c) A joint scrutiny meeting had recently been held. This had provided an opportunity for the Chair to discuss the work of the LEP with members of the City and County Councils.

- (e) Local Development Orders are increasingly being advocated by Government as a means of delivering priority employment sites, particularly Enterprise Zones. The Board discussed how these could be promoted and their consequences in terms of promoting the area to Government.

**Action:**

1. Survey of Local Planning Authorities on LDO to be undertaken.
2. Issue to be covered in a letter to Government.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION**

**Date of Next Meeting**

18 January 2012 at 6.00 p.m. at Staffordshire Place 1, Tipping Street, Stafford, ST16 2LP.