

**Notes of the LEP Executive Group Meeting
Drawing Room, County Buildings
Thursday 20th July 2017**

Present

Group Members

David Frost (Chairman)	
John Henderson	Chief Executive, Staffordshire County Council
Jonathan Dale	Denoviant
Kevin Oakes	Royal Crown Derby
David Sidaway	City Director, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Cllr Abi Brown	Deputy Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Cllr Philip Atkins	Leader, Staffordshire County Council
Prof Liz Barnes	Staffordshire University
Cllr Patrick Farrington	Stafford Borough Council
Ken Stepney	JCB
Cllr Brian Edwards	South Staffordshire Council

Advisory/Secretariat

Peter Davenport	Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP
Julie Frost	Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP
Alison Thomas	Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP
John Devlin	Programme Consultant
Andrea Whitworth	Cities and Local Growth Unit

In Attendance

Apologies

Sarah Montgomery	National Memorial Arboretum
Richard Cotterell	Perkins

1. Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. Congratulations were extended to Stoke-on-Trent City Council on being shortlisted to be the City of Culture in 2021. The Chairman gave feedback on from the launch of the Dove Engineering Centre at the JCB Academy. He had been impressed by the confident, knowledgeable and exemplary young people he met. Similarly positive feedback was given on the Apprenticeships Graduation Ceremony that had taken place at the County Showground.

2. Apologies

These were noted.

3. Declarations of Interest

None. Members of the Executive Group were reminded that, to be compliant with best practice, Declarations of Interest must also be provided for alternates attending on their behalf. The Partnerships Manager was working with the SCC Scrutiny to provide guidance to ensure correct compliancy.

4. Constellation Partnership

A presentation was given outlining the aims and objectives, including the benefits of HS2. An interim document had been submitted to government in July with a final Growth document to be submitted in September.

5. Notes of the previous meeting and any matters arising

The minutes were agreed to be a true record of the meeting, with an amendment to note Kevin Oakes apologies. Jonathan Dale had written to DCLG as Chairman of the ESIF Committee and, although a response had not been received, matters were beginning to be addressed. A meeting had been scheduled for Jonathan to meet with DCLG on the 23rd July.

6. Chairman's Delegated Decisions and Actions

The Chairman had sent letters of support for a submission to the Connecting Eligibility Fund by Keele University. Lichfield Southern Bypass, Cobridge Junction and a Heritage Action Zone for Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

7. Proposed Board Appointments and SSLEP Ambassadors

The Group considered proposals, following the spring recruitment exercise, ambassadors and the Partnership Board. Following consideration and discussion, the Executive Group accepted the recommendations outlined in the report to:

- a. Endorse the appointment of Paul Farmer, Alun Rogers, Wendy Dean and Mohammed Ahmed.
- b. To invite James Leavesley to join the Executive Group to strengthen its property and Agri Tech knowledge
- c. To establish an Ambassador Group as set out in section 3.1 of the report as a vehicle to retain and strengthen links with our key employers. This was agreed with the caveat that public sector members would be excluded.

The first meeting of the Partnership Board Working Group would be taking place in September.

Action: Andrea Whitworth to provide details of the Ambassador Programme run by Coventry and Worcestershire LEP

8. KPIs

The report was circulated for information. Vacancy Data analysis would be circulated separately. It was agreed that statistics would need to be monitored over the next few months, and analysis of individual Districts was required, including the types of start up businesses.

Action: Add as an agenda item for September's Executive Group Meeting

9. Investment Service Review

A meeting was being arranged and it was agreed to postpone this item to September's meeting

10. SMART Staffordshire Update & Discussion

Liz Barnes and John Henderson verbally outlined the discussions that had been taking place to maximise the opportunities that Digital Technologies presented. Evidence clearly demonstrated that there was significant potential to expand the sector locally and raise awareness and applications. Ideas being followed included a live/work digital hub; digital solutions for care; a Digital Apprenticeship Hub; courses and support for schools. Microsoft had supported a number of events and further discussions were planned. The Executive Group welcomed the update and looked forward to a further report as discussions progressed.

11. Midlands Engine/Midlands Connect

A verbal update was given. The Chairman and Cllr Atkins had recently attended a Midland Connect Meeting. It had been announced that the electrification of the Midlands main line would not now be going ahead. It was imperative the LEP engaged fully with the Midlands Engine to ensure involvement and firm representation for the region, as the investments proposed, potentially in transport infrastructure, were of key importance. Concern had been expressed at the progress of the Midlands Engine and the potential impact that this would have on its credibility.

12 City & Growth Deal Programme Report – Confidential

The report and dashboards were noted. Good progress was being made on many schemes and the outcomes were on target. However, as a consequence of slippage and an over-allocation by Government, an underspend of £7.97M had been identified in 2017/18. A range of options were being investigated including bringing forward the Keele Smart Innovation Hub.

The Executive considered the Business Case for the funding of £1.76M over 3 years to launch the Skills Equipment Fund. It was noted that additional allocation was being sought and a supplementary paper was being prepared. Until this was agreed, the business case should be provisionally approved. The Executive Group agreed the business case for the allocation of £1M to the Keele Science Park Smart Innovation Hub.

13. 2016/17 Accounts

The 2016/17 draft accounts had been circulated. The group accepted the recommendation to approve the 2016/17 Accounts for publication.

14. Q1 2017/18 LEP Finances Dashboard

The Dashboard was noted.

15. Policy and Task Group Updates

Ceramics Sector Deal - Confidential

The proposition was circulated for information and was currently with BEIS for their consideration. A meeting was scheduled for week commencing 14th August to review documents. Volunteers were being sought to progress the project. Feedback from BEIS had been positive and the leadership shown by the sector, partners and its diversity had been welcomed. Although the rationale was clear, more needed to be said about the place elements and their linkage to the sector, innovation streams and where the future of the sector could lie. It would be important to maintain the momentum.

Institute of Technology Discussions

The initiative was being progressed by a working group convened by Professor Martin Jones at Staffordshire University.

Action: Peter Davenport to ascertain what is going on in neighbouring areas

Future Engagements Events

The approach to future events was outlined. This was agreed and members were asked to make themselves available, where possible, to chair or lead engagement events and contact the communications manager with ideas for future events, supply business contacts and flag up networking opportunities.

16. Any other Business

Thanks were extended to Ken Stepney and Jonathan Dale, who had come to the end of their term of office. They had both contributed tremendously to the SSLEP, Ken on Skills and Jonathan on Business Development and ESIF.

The City thanked the LEP for its support in the City of Culture bid.

It was noted that Cllr Brian Edwards had been invited by the Black County LEP to sit on their Board as an advisor.

Date of Next Meeting:

Thursday 14th September, Drawing Room, County Buildings, Martin Street, Stafford, ST16 2HE