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Minutes of the Shadow Stoke and Staffordshire LEP Area (SSSLEP) ESIF Sub-Committee Meeting

Date: 15 December 2015 16:00 – 18:00

Venue: Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce

Present	Representing
Members/Alternates	
John Adlen	Staffordshire University
Cllr Gordon Alcott	Southern Staffordshire District Authorities
Cllr Philip Atkins	Staffordshire County Council
Mark Bacon	Keele University
Tom Blackmore	DCLG (Deputy Chair)
Chris Findon	RPA/DEFRA
Cllr Terence Follows	Stoke-on-Trent Council
Andrew Greenhough	Stoke-on-Trent College
Harjinder Dhani	DWP
Jill Norman	Support Staffordshire
Emma Johnson	Natural England
Jo Rushton	DWP
Sarah Williams	Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce
Observers	
Mark Connell	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Peter Hamid	DCLG (Minutes)
Nigel Senior	Staffordshire County Council
Julie Obada	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Glenn Watson	Cannock Chase District Council
Apologies	Representing
Jonathan Dale	Stoke on Trent & Staffordshire LEP Board member (Chair)
Allan Howells	Staffordshire University
Cllr Steven Claymore	Tamworth District Council
Cllr Patrick Farrington	Stafford Borough Council
Sajid Hashmi	VAST
Graham Morley	South Staffordshire College
Kevin Postones	Department for Business, Skills and Innovation (BIS)
Cllr Elizabeth Shenton	Newcastle Borough Council
Julian Woolford	Staffordshire Wildlife Trust
1	Apologies, Minutes of last meeting and actions (Tom Blackmore)
	Action
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tom Blackmore (Acting Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting. Cllr Alcott noted that Mark Winnington and Michael Titchford attended the meeting on the 18th November 2015, but were not recorded as attendees in the minutes. Tom asked for the minutes to be updated accordingly. Aside from point 2, the minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting. Tom provided an update on two of the actions arising from the last meeting. DCLG will issue a link to the latest Eligibility Guidance to Sub-Committee members before the next meeting in January 2016.



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<p>Tom also advised that a report on Stoke and Staffordshire LEP (SSLEP) ESIF commitment levels will be provided to members in advance of the next meeting in January. This will take into account the Full Applications submitted in November which are currently under appraisal by DCLG.</p>	
<p>2 ESIF Programme Update (Tom Blackmore)</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tom provided a summary of the paper circulated to Sub-Committee members. Notional Priority Axis level allocations have now been finalised for the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP. 2. Nigel Senior commented that the funds originally earmarked for Priority 7 – Sustainable Transport has been moved to Priority 3 Enhancing the Competitiveness of SME’s. It was noted that Priority 7 allocations have only been approved in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The response to the previous Priority 3 Calls has been strong, so the ‘additional’ funding for this priority is welcome. 3. The LEP area notional targets will not be finalised until the 15th January 2016, which is slightly later than anticipated. This is due to the need to take into account the planned use of Financial Instruments in some LEP areas. In view of this the deadline to submit refreshed ESIF strategies has been extended to the 6th February 2016. 4. The Priority 1 and 4 Project Calls are currently open. Both will close at the end of January. Sub-Committee members were asked to use their contacts to promote the Calls. 5. Cllr Alcott remarked that a lack of match-funding may hamper responses to current and future Project Calls. It was acknowledged that match-funding (or lack thereof) has been a problem during successive ERDF programmes. 6. It was noted that the proposed ‘Fund of Funds’ will assist in terms of providing finance to SMEs and that the Growth Hub will provide an important function in terms of raising awareness of the available funding streams. 7. Mark Bacon made the point that the deadline for submitting Full Applications within 3 months of the initial invitation may be very challenging for capital projects, particularly where RIBA Stage 3 plans are required. Mark asked if there was any flexibility on this deadline. Tom acknowledged that it is difficult for capital projects, but advised that the Managing Authority has to apply deadlines equally to all applicants without exception. 	<p>AP1 - DCLG to find out if there are issues nationally in terms of the submission of capital project full applications within the required timescales.</p>
<p>3 ESF Opt-in Update (Harjinder Dhami)</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Final Notional ESF allocations for the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP (SSLEP) area have now been confirmed. A paper setting out the allocations was circulated to meeting attendees. 2. Harjinder advised that the allocations will change in order to incorporate the transfer of Priority 1 transitional funds from GBSLEP to SSLEP. The associated outputs will also transfer from GBSLEP to SSLEP. 3. Cllr Atkins stressed the importance of ensuring that the process for managing this process, particularly in terms of the audit trail is clarified. He asked for the Managing Authority and Opt-in Partners to provide assurance on this. This was noted by the Managing Authority. 	



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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Now that the Notional allocations are in place, DWP is happy to work with LEPs to develop Open Calls. LEPs will be asked to prioritise Calls by Investment Priority in order to manage work-flows accordingly. 5. Harjinder re-iterated the point made at the last meeting that the SFA Opt-in must conclude by March 2018: The SFA approached LEPs with two options:1- The proposed funding and targets remain the same, but are expended/achieved within an accelerated timescale; 2-The targets and funding are reduced on a pro-rata basis. 6. Julie Obada advised that SSLEP has opted for a ‘multi-option approach’, in other words, decisions will be made based on considering the merits of each programme. 7. The SFA have commenced their procurement with a themed Investment Priority approach. Steps to procure NEET provision have already begun. There are currently two SSLEP applications, one for Investment Priorities 1.1, 1.2, and 1.4 amounting to £13.3 million and one for Investment Priority 2.1 amounting to £7.7 million. 8. Big Lottery Fund: Stage 1 of the application process for the first Bidding Round has been completed. 70 applications nationally have been invited to submit a Stage 2 application. Applicants have been given advice on how to apply for funding to support the development of Stage 2 applications. It is expected that successful projects will ‘go live’ in April 2016. It is anticipated that SSLEP applications will be considered under the second Bidding Round. 9. DWP : Nationally ,4 Memorandums of Understanding have been issued following the appraisal of 4 applications. The SSLEP application is due in mid- December 2015. Harjinder asked if Sub-Committee members wanted to consider the application via written procedure or via an ESIF Sub-Committee meeting. 10. The Sub-Committee agreed that given the size of the application (£7.98 million) it should be considered at the next meeting in January. 11. Julie Obada noted that it is important that the application is progressed swiftly. Even if the project is approved in January 2016, delivery will not commence until September 2016, meaning a short timescale for delivering the necessary activities. 	
<p>4 ESF Technical Assistance Full Application (Harjinder Dhami)</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Harjinder provided a verbal summary of the full appraisal of the above application, based on the papers circulated to members. Comments were invited. 2. Declarations of Interest: Cllr Atkins; Cllr Alcott; Cllr Follows; J Norman 3. The Sub-Committee agreed that the application was sufficiently aligned with local strategic priorities. 	
<p>5 EAFRD Update (Chris Findon)</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As mentioned at the previous meeting, there are currently two open Project Calls in Stoke and Staffordshire, one relating to Tourism and one to Business Support. Both Calls close on 8 January. The response thus far has been limited and members were urged to use their contacts to promote both calls. 2. The Staffordshire Leader Programme is underway and the first Bidding Round has been issued. Expressions of Interests have already been received from a wide range of businesses. 	



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<p>3. It was re-iterated that discussions have been held with the GBSLEP and SSLEP to ensure that Calls are aligned effectively.</p>	
6. Date and time of the next meeting	
<p>1. The next meeting is provisionally scheduled for either the 20th or 21st January 2016, at Stoke-on-Trent Civic Centre, 4 pm to 6 pm. Date, time and venue to be confirmed in due course.</p> <p>2. DCLG is working to provide a provisional schedule of meeting dates for 2016.</p>	AP2 – DCLG to provide a list of provisional meeting dates for 2016 before the next meeting in January 2016.