

**LEP Company Executive Board Meeting
via MS Teams conference call
Thursday 18 June 2020
Final Minutes**

Board Directors

Alun Rogers (Chair)	risual
Mohammed Ahmed	Homeserve
Hannah Ault	Valentine Clays
Prof Liz Barnes	Vice-Chancellor, University of Staffordshire
Sara Williams	Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce
Caroline Brown	Caja Group
Sinead Butters	Aspire Housing Ltd
James Leavesley (Vice Chair)	Leavesley Group
Prof Trevor McMillan	Vice-Chancellor, University of Keele
Cllr Abi Brown	Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Cllr Patrick Farrington	Leader, Stafford Borough Council
Cllr Philip Atkins	Leader, Stafford County Council
Cllr Jeremy Oates	Portfolio Holder Heritage & Growth, Tamworth Borough Council
Cllr Simon Tagg	Leader, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Cllr George Allen #1	Deputy Leader Regen & Planning, East Staffs Borough Council

#1 Attending in a non-voting capacity pending formal consideration of intent and establishing processes and procedures for board directorship.

Advisory/Secretariat

Simon Ablewhite	SSLEP Accountable Body
Jacqui Casey	Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP Interim Manger
Jo Kemp	SSLEP Secretariat/Business Engagement Officer
Emma Wilson	SSLEP Project Officer

In Attendance

Martin Hamilton	Chief Executive, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Jon Rouse	City Director, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Phil Cresswell	Director of Place Growth and Prosperity
Cllr Brian Edwards	Leader South Staffordshire District Council
Clare Hannah	BEIS
Cllr Mark Winnington	Cabinet Member for Economic Growth
Neil Rodgers	Executive Director (Place) Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Cllr Janine Bridges	Portfolio Holder for Education & Economy, Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Apologies

1. Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. AR noted that the meeting was quorate.

2. Apologies

These were noted.

3. Declarations of Interest

Declarations were raised by SB, Cllr ST, Cllr PF, TM, LB & JL regarding Item 9.

4. Notes of the previous meeting and matters arising

Minutes were agreed as an accurate record. Typo noted on item 5 (now corrected).

5. Chair's Update and Delegated Decisions

- Midlands Business Round Table meeting attended with Ministers Nadhim Zahawi & Simon Clarke. 35 businesses attended. SSLEP businesses included risual, Caja, JCB & Alton Towers & the latter was able to offer the Govt help regarding the re-opening of leisure facilities/theme parks.
- Also attended West Midlands Chair meetings – Govt. still on message about LIS, which is good news. Took feedback messages to Govt. regarding hospitality industry restarting, particularly pubs; Previously raised issue of Professional services e.g. Solicitors, Accountants; & continue to lobby through LEP network
- Emma Catterall interviewed today – MD of Alton Towers. SB endorsed EC. JL concurred.
Decision: Board agreed appointment of Emma Catterall as Board Director.
- Emma Wilson has put together a piece of work on structure & governance of the LEP & LEP board. This shows how contributions to LIS, for projects & delivering on strategy fit. AR compared SSLEP structure to other LEP structures (D2N2. GBS, New Anglia, SEM, Greater Lincs.) & highlighted that:
 - ❖ Important to understand that we cannot run our LEP as we would run our own Companies.
 - ❖ This is public-private partnership. The fact that public money flows through it does dictate to a large degree how we are required to organise ourselves.
 - ❖ We are required to hold discussions with a wide-range of partners & stakeholders. we do this through working groups which include partners and civil servants.
 - ❖ Useful to understand how other LEPs operate.

Comments invited:

- ❖ LB - we're in a good position & similar to other LEPs. We might need to give sector specific advisory groups (like Chambers) future focus.
- ❖ JC – Jo Kemp has worked on a list already, as part of Growing Business/secretariat work. Work would be progresses with Chamber colleagues ensuring no overlaps/dilution and minimising confusion for businesses.
- ❖ SW welcomed approach noting that we can create some, develop some & augment/change some sector groups.

6. Covid Taskforce & LIS Sub-Group Updates

Item 6i Taskforce has been busy, meeting each Tuesday. Ref. item 6 App 6i & ii. Each sub-group has reported emerging priorities & themes. Needs to be ready by mid/late July, ready to lobby through August.

Item 6ii –

Growing Businesses, Future Workforce & Innovation

Growing Businesses - HA updated the Board as follows:

- Small business spaces. Concern about what's needed post Covid. Research needed to understand these needs. Some might stay at home more now
- Enterprise Centres - what are the needs now? – We need to identify right start-up places
- Planning policy for rural growth needs potential reviewing
- Staffs Uni smart-hub
- Peer to Peer - JK has collated list of forums & networks. Review with Chamber to be done.
- SW - Growth Mapper – Growth Hub team trained & ready to roll it out

Future Workforce – LB updated the Board as follows:

5 headings:

- Careers Info - from schools & employers - method is dated. Employers want to work better. Want to work with SAP to develop.
- Training & Education - furloughed & unemployed in S-O-T could be a big issue. Low progression rate of Higher Education; Tamworth & Stoke/Stafford have lower than average UK figure progression.
- Upskill of existing workforce - move to digital?
- Redundancies
- New jobs - Health sector. New ways of working.

Innovation – TM updated the Board as follows:

- R&D is a big definition, but now recognizing innovation on a daily basis. Day to day how can networks help each other here? How can LEP help?
- British Innovation centre has access to funds to support business - needs good advertising.
- What physical facilities are needed? New, or evaluating what space we have?
- Digital & energy - How do we get external discussion - scan the horizon to pull in info for internal Co's or move Co's into the County. For R&D Co's.
- Work done @ Keele, but only 5 Co's in past 5 years have written papers published in scientific journals – low compared to many other parts of the country.

AR – Sub-Groups are under immense pressure now, to be ready with Implementation Plans before summer break. These sub-groups helped this week, when an emergency meeting was called about possible emerging funding/call from Govt. last Thursday (11th) Item 9. View of Strategic fit helped from Sub-Groups.

Item 6iii

Approach to 'Place'

AR - Structure discussed last time, this has now been reviewed & brought back. 2 tier structure:-

1. Place Sub-Group with Board members & businesses like other groups.
2. Localities Sub-Group - with Districts, City, etc. where public sector is strong & feed this into Place sub-group.

Comments welcomed on 2 tier;

Several agreed it was appropriate to be prioritising our Local Authority partners in supporting on technical information & detailed knowledge of their own localities, therefore a strong approach. Local knowledge is vital to success of what's needed where. Very important to get Boroughs & Districts to deliver in that locality, have a buy-in & influence to deliver at a later stage.

AR - regarding leadership of groups – we are happy with Place. Localities - private sector might not know as much, so public sector involvement needed.

Cllr AB, Cllr PA, Cllr FA, and Cllr ST discussed the benefits of political level engagement around a wide range of matters such as planning, but also enforcement, licensing and speed of decision making.

AR noted deviation in paper recommendation - seeking agreement/endorsement of Place Group as set out & deviation to the Localities Group for Local Authorities to put forward an elected member or CEO/Dir. Cllr AB discussed points of clarification.

Decision: That Localities Group places are offered to Leaders, with Leaders being permitted to send their CEOs/Dirs.

AR – advised that workload needs to go through quickly. So, much work is needed quickly.

7. SSLEP Communications Strategy

AR reminded the board that HA has a background in marketing & has pulled together an outline strategy for the area to build plans around LEP Strategy, plus Vision & Values.

HA - further explained that it's a working document from which a communications plan will be developed. Previous discussions had noted that an agency is used for this work and Board would approve any Plan.

Covid digital campaign activity review for first 6 weeks is due and will show progress from a standing start. This work will be put forward and support discussions with the successful agency, to ensure it is developed & published professionally.

HA urged Board to get behind the Advocacy briefing please. Stats so far positive, but another 6wks to go before full outcome can be vetted. There has been a lack of pro-active support from Board & partners which, if provided over next 6 weeks, will maximise reach.

LB - supports V&V. Strategy & raised the issue of should those who receive funding acknowledge this, like happens on hoardings etc. Recognition of LEP support? We should demand it in marketing materials for things where activity & projects have been LEP funded.

Cllr JO – noted that he hadn't realised how useful the Advocacy briefing was until it was given some thought, so agrees that the Board should support.

HA – urged the Board to watch Alun's video & share it. Amplify the message!

Decision: Board agreed the Marketing Strategy & revised Vision & Values statement, developed further at a recent workshop.

Action: All Board Members to support the Covid Campaign and be proactive in boosting social media attention.

8. Report of Strategic Programme Management Board

SB noted decision of SPMG at 1 June 2020 meeting to maximise in year expenditure through drawdown of LGF funding against all contracted projects. This would result in those project that are unable to meet the spend deadline having to wait to receive funding required after 31 March 2021, until i54 business rates were available. Slipped against two schemes totalling £3.149m had been moved to i54 project in order to ensure funding was not lost to the original projects or to the area.

Payback to the original intended schemes, through business rate uplift could slip back to 2024/25. Board were asked to consider the principal of using Accountable Body flexibilities in using future programme underspends to replace funding to these lagging projects earlier than the 2025 date.

LB - supported the idea, but there are several, so how will we prioritise. SB noted would need to look into this if Board was content on principle. JC considered it should be discussed at SPMG, would need to be even handed in relation to all schemes awaiting repayment and proportionate return could be one option for SPMG to consider.

PC - CVEZ funding mechanism approved by BEIS & City Council. Can we log looking at this re: 2nd bullet point (Item 8 para 8).

TM supported LB's point & agrees that SPMG should investigate lagging projects. Lagging projects might have a knock-on effect when new funding comes up if it's partially tied up. Who is formally responsible for underspend between LEP & who gets fund? JC confirmed project promoter is responsible if govt chooses to withdraw funds. LEP contracting arrangements are subject to the LEP receiving the government funds to which they relate. Our i54 'Mitigation Scheme' means we are able to use current year underspends against this scheme and, as an EZ scheme, can choose to pay back schemes which has not performed to timetable. All EZ business rate uplift is LEP funding and the LEP determines its allocation, not the delivery partner.

AR – need to ensure we don't lose legacy money.

9. SSLEP Project & Programme Pipeline Development

JL - Pipeline projects were called for in a SSLEP Briefing session last Thursday (11th June) prompted by a ministerial call for ideas for capital funding 'shovel ready schemes' deliverable by Jan 2022. Partners and stakeholders submitted circa 60 reference projects totalling £120M. Papers taken through SPMG acknowledged the normal 3 month timescales involved in the SSLEP 'Open Call Process' set out in the Assurance Framework and the secretariat officers were empowered to use the limited time available to sieve against binary criteria and qualitatively assess other deliverables and metrics. This led to circa 35 projects totalling in the region of £65M. A 'work in progress' submission list was shown by AR briefly to the Board to demonstrate it still retained the broad shape and financial value to that shared with SPMG earlier that day.

10. SSLEP Annual Report 2019/20

EW – explained to the Board that she began the Annual Report in April, engaging with partners to see what has been delivered, in order to build the report. It has been through a few drafts & we are now seeking any further comments to get the final draft out next month. TM noted that the images did not reflect the diversity of county.

AR – asked the Board to feedback anything else to EW please.

Decision: Board agreed to delegate final sign off to SSLEP Chair.

11. Stoke Projects Presentation

AR introduced the topic by advising he'd had talks about the complexity of the delivery of the featured projects & had invited S-o-T City Council personnel to provide a brief presentation to update on progress and to enable Board members to understand why things get delayed.

AB noted these schemes were significant for North Staffs as a whole, not just for the City. PA reiterated that projects which help the area, need to be delivered. PC presented the details. JC confirmed the scheme were contracted and all under delivery, including now the Etruria Valley scheme which was backed by significant Govt investment and 1st claim was under preparation. The detailed monitoring and performance management would be overseen by SPMG going forward.

12. LEP Risk Register

CB – A Risk Register workshop was held. The new look reporting arrangements were a work in progress aiming to focus on active management of risk, with a consistent approach, clear ownership, management & escalation. Key points on slide deck = single risk log visible to all. Different views & dashboards & ownership clear. Chairs should update & review these before the September Board meeting. Notes & guidance will be issued before then. Ensure the risk agenda items raised at each Board meeting are for red risks only. SPMG and Audit & Finance Committee (as appropriate) should previously have seen these.

Action: All to review the risks in association with their Sub Groups, once details and guidance are provided.

The Board can expect the new register to appear from September.

14. Forward Plan

Draft LIS delivery plan to be signed off. Pressure on sub-group members in the next 5 weeks, as delivery plans needs to be completed well ahead of September Comprehensive Spending Review. Delivery Plan is needed to align shared priorities for a CSR submission.

AGM - need to arrange & sort in July.

LB - update on 5G for next meeting. Jonathan Gullis, JR & AB are meeting regarding infrastructure soon. A 10 min agenda item next month was agreed.

Action: 5G agenda item for July Board.

Action: All to consider future Board Items.

TM – A Staffordshire company, Cobra Biologics, is doing well working towards a Covid-19 vaccine. Please share/Tweet etc. due to its International significance.

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 16th July 2020 @ 4pm

Location: Via MS Teams.