

**Notes of the LEP Executive Group Meeting
Drawing Room, County Buildings
Thursday 14th December 2017**

Present

Group Members

David Frost (Chairman)	
Cllr Abi Brown	Deputy Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Phil Cresswell	Director of Place, Growth & Prosperity, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Wendy Dean	Strategi Solutions
Cllr Brian Edwards	South Staffordshire Council
John Henderson	Chief Executive, Staffordshire County Council
Prof Martin Jones (for Prof Liz Barnes)	Staffordshire University
James Leavesley	Leavesley Group
Alun Rogers	Risual
Cllr Mark Winnington	Rep. Leader Staffordshire CC

Advisory/Secretariat

Peter Davenport	Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP
Alison Thomas	Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP
John Devlin	Programme Consultant

In Attendance

Andrea Whitworth	BEIS
Denise Brown Stoke College, Jo Wright De Novo Advisory Ltd	

Apologies

Mohammed Ahmed	National Grid
Cllr Philip Atkins	Leader, Staffordshire County Council
Prof Liz Barnes	Staffordshire University
Richard Cotterell	Perkins
Paul Farmer	Wade's Ceramics
Cllr Patrick Farrington	Stafford Borough Council
Sarah Montgomery	National Memorial Arboretum
Kevin Oakes	Royal Crown Derby
David Sidaway	City Director, Stoke-on-Trent City Council

1. Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made around the table.

2. Apologies

These were noted.

3. Declarations of Interest

No additions were made to those already recorded.

4. Notes of the previous meeting and any matters arising

The minutes were agreed to be a true record of the meeting.

5. Chairman's Delegated Decisions and Actions

There were no delegated decisions to report.

The Chairman gave an update on Stoke-on-Trent's City of Culture bid for 2021. The City reached the final shortlist of five, but Coventry was chosen. This was disappointing but he had been greatly impressed by the spirit of cohesion that the Stoke-on-Trent bid had brought about and the very high level of support from across the city and further afield. He said it was important to preserve this cohesion and cross-sector working and build on it for the future.

The Chairman reported on the proposed loss of 500 jobs at GE's Lichfield Road site in Stafford. This was prompted by global market conditions for GE, but was still a blow for the town. Cllr Winnington said that Staffordshire County Council was part of a taskforce, led by Stafford Borough Council, which would be assisting those losing their jobs. It was meeting with the DWP and Stafford MP Jeremy Lefroy on 16th February 2018.

The Chairman reported that as part of the Industrial Strategy the Government was setting up Skills Advisory Panels for England and one of the first would cover the West Midlands Combined Authority area. This would include non-constituent members of the WMCA in the SSLEP area. It was not yet clear how the Government would approach overlapping LEP boundaries or how the panels would feed into the work of LEPs.

6. KPIs

The dashboard was noted.

7. Industrial Strategy White Paper

The group were informed that the Industrial Strategy White Paper was published at the end of November. A web link to the document and a copy of the LEP Network analysis had been circulated. The group were advised that LEP Chairs had collectively written to Jake Berry – Minister for the Northern Powerhouse and Local Growth, Margot James – Minister for Small Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and Andrew Jones – Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury.

In anticipation of the Industrial strategy and new funding mechanisms the LEP Network commissioned Shared Intelligence to collate views and set out thinking on future funding and the evolution of LEPs. The Chairman reported that the ceramics sector was referenced in the White Paper and the British Ceramics Confederation was continuing to press strongly for a ceramics sector deal supported by SSLEP.

The group discussed how the national and local elements of the Industrial Strategy would relate to each other and be delivered, and how to dovetail the LEP's economic strategy with the Industrial Strategy. There was also discussion on the impact of digital on traditional patterns of industry location and housing growth.

8. FE Review Update – Confidential

9. Career Learning Pilot

The Executive Group was given details of the recently announced Career Learning Pilot for the LEP area, which aimed to raise the skills and productivity of people in work, and agreed the next steps for implementation.

The purpose of the pilot is to test the best ways to reach out to lower skilled working adults and the effect different levels of fee subsidy has on the demand for courses that are valuable to adults and important to the economy of the area. The Pilot would therefore test:

- How best to reach adults who are in work and low skilled including the use of face-to-face career guidance
- Whether reducing the cost of courses (by 25%, 75% and 100%) makes targeted adults more likely to do economically valuable learning matched to local economic need

The SSLEP will have access to share of £9m set aside for the pilots. The next steps would be to scope out a number of ideas for testing and the development of a costed delivery plan by the end of February 2018. The intention was that the pilot should go live in March 2018 which was challenging.

The Executive Group supported the SSLEP involvement in the pilot and the next steps.

10. City Deal & Growth Deal Report - Confidential

11. Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone – Confidential

12. Constellation Partnership Update

The draft Growth Strategy had been submitted to Government and a response was awaited. In the interim it had been agreed to pause the process of appointing an independent Chair. This would be discussed again at a Leaders and LEP Chairs meeting in January.

It was noted that a study had been commissioned into the potential for a “Jessica” fund to cover the geographies of CWLEP and SSLEP. Abi Brown expressed concern that this hadn’t been agreed at a CP Board level. The outcome of the study and resultant action would need to be discussed further.

13 Policy and Task Group Updates

Confidential item – HEFCE catalyst

Prof Jones advised the group that in the New Year that Staffordshire University would be receiving £8m government funding towards a £17m new digital apprenticeships and skills hub project, alongside curriculum development in applied materials. The announcement was currently embargoed.

14 Any Other Business

Cllr Brown reported that the Longton area of Stoke-on-Trent had gained Heritage Action Zone status.