Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Constitution – April 2018

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Index

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2	March 2017	Chris Gill	To include National Assurance Framework November 2016 requirements
3	April 2018	Peter Davenport	Annual review in the light of January 2018 Best practice guidance

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Definitions & Abbreviations

SSLEP — **Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership**

Meaning the partnership of private and public sector.

Partnership — **SSLEP Partnership**

The overarching body including membership from all partners and Reviews the work of the EB and provides strategic guidance. Meets twice per year.

EB — **Executive Board**

The decision-making operational body. Determines operational strategy. Meets 8 times per year.

SPMG — **Strategic Programme Management Group**

The body which oversees the investment programme and approves schemes. Reports to the Executive Board. Meets Quarterly

PAG — **Programme Assurance Group**

Examines project Business Plans from SPMG investment programme and monitors delivery. Advises the Executive Board.

ESEG — **Education Skills & Employment Group**

Responsible for securing delivery of the SSLEP Skills Strategy and its programme of activities and investments.

EU — **European Union**

ESIF — **European Structural & Investment Funds**

ESIFSC — **ESIF Sub-Committee**

Responsible for the strategic oversight of local investments of EU funds. Managed by MHCLG

LEP — **Local Enterprise Partnership**

The investment & regeneration bodies set-up across the country by government.

AFC — **Audit & Finance Committee**

Maintains strategic oversight of all SSLEP led expenditure and investment. Maintains and manages the Risk Register.

DMP — **Destination Management Partnership**

DEFRA — **Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs**

S151 Officer — A Local Authority officer nominated to be **responsible for its financial affairs**.

EAFRD — **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development**

MA — **Managing Authorities**

A designated Managing Authority provides information on the programme, selects projects and monitors implementation.

Introduction

This document outlines in detail the operational and structural arrangements for the Stoke –on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

It details the organisational structure, the relationships between the various boards, committees and working groups of the Partnership, and how they are supported by the secretariat.

It also sets out the processes and protocols by which the SSLEP governs itself, including monitoring arrangements.

The document outlines project and initiative delivery arrangements, responsibilities and monitoring measures.

Rather than repeat common procedures and protocols throughout the document, these are grouped in the Appendices and, for the avoidance of doubt, **apply to ALL** unless specifically stated otherwise.

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1. SSLEP Partnership

1.1 Purpose

The Partnership is the overarching body which brings together all of the partners across the area who have a shared objective in seeing the local economy prosper.

It reviews the work of the Executive Board on a biannual basis and acts as a forum to discuss and agree the strategic issues the SSLEP needs to focus on. In particular it is responsible for:

- ensuring the delivery of economic growth in the SSLEP area;

- working in partnership across public and private sectors, ensuring SSLEP is business led and that the business voice influences the economic strategies for the area;

- championing Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire as the place to do business; and facilitating an entrepreneurial environment in which business can start-up, prosper and grow. Throughout this document the SSLEP Partnership will simply be referred to as the Partnership.

1.2 Membership:

The core membership of the Partnership shall comprise:

- Chair appointed by the Board (Business) - 1

- Business - 11 (Inc. the Chief Executive of the Chambers of Commerce, and Chair of the DMP)

- A representative from the Community Enterprise business sector

- Leader or nominee and Chief Executive or nominee of the accountable bodies – 4

- Leader or their nominee of the District Councils that are members of the SSLEP.

- Constituent University Representation – 2

- Chair of the Association of Colleges – 1

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1.3 Post-holders:

1.3.1 Chair

- The Partnership will be led by the chair of the Executive Board who will be appointed from the private sector.
- The Chairs appointment shall be nominated by the Executive Board and ratified by the Partnership.
- The Chair shall be appointed for terms of up to 3 years, with their performance subject to annual review by the Executive Board. The Partnership may vote to recommend the removal of the Chair should they have concerns regarding their performance, including (but not limited to) concerns regarding:
  - o declaration of interests;
  - o fraud & misconduct;
  - o attendance at meetings;
  - o delivery of SSLEP objectives.
- Duties of the Chair will be to:
  - o provide leadership in the delivery of the vision, strategic objectives, targets, and outputs, working with the Vice Chair and the Executive Board;
  - o chair meetings of the Partnership and Executive Board and ensure their smooth and effective operation;
  - o have responsibility for taking a casting vote in the event of a tie in any vote undertaken at Partnership meetings or Executive Board;
  - o build cohesion within the SSLEP partnership, ensuring that all partners work together for the best outcomes for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire;
  - o represent SSLEP at high profile events, engaging in national and local discussions and public relations opportunities as required;
  - o undertake lobbying activity and pursue opportunities to influence Government and wider policy; and
  - o ensure the Secretariat is operating effectively and within its mandate.

1.3.2 Vice-Chair

- The Executive Board will also appoint a Vice-Chair from their membership. The Vice-Chair will serve in that position until and unless:

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- the Executive Board decides to appoint a new Vice-Chair;
- the person serving in that position resigns as Vice-Chair or from the Board; or
- their term of office comes to an end

- The Vice-Chair will chair meetings of the Partnership when the Chair is unable to attend.

- If neither the Chair nor Vice-Chair can attend a meeting consideration will be given to whether the meeting should proceed or be postponed. If the Chair determines that the meeting should be postponed, agreement from the wider Partnership will be sought via Electronic Procedure (see Appendix 2). If the meeting proceeds the Partnership will appoint a Chair for that specific meeting from the Partnership Members present and that appointee shall have all the usual powers and responsibilities of the Chair for the course of that meeting.

1.3.3 Representation and Attendance

For the Partnership to be quorate no fewer than **seven** members must be in attendance at the meeting.

- At least four of those seven members must be Business Members, with at least 3 being Leaders or their nominees of Local Authorities.

- Where the Partnership is not quorate, business may proceed but decisions will be subject to confirmation either by: the majority of members present and voting at the next appropriate meeting, provided that a quorum is present; or via the Electronic Procedure (see Appendix 2) if more appropriate.

- Only full members of the Partnership may take part in any vote. Observers or guests at the meeting may participate in discussion if invited to do so by the Chair, but are not entitled to vote.

- Members may nominate an alternate who should comply with the protocols of SSLEP and may vote on their behalf.

1.3.4 Timetabling/frequency

- The Partnership shall meet **twice a year** (normally March & November) with a third annual public meeting each year. A calendar of future meetings will be set for a year at a time.

- It will replace the Executive Board meeting in the months that it convenes.

2. Executive Board

2.1 Purpose/remit/powers/decision-making

The SSLEP Executive Board will be accountable for the management of SSLEP business, within the constraints set by the key Partnership strategies.

2.2 The SSLEP Executive Board will be responsible for:

- Setting the overarching vision and strategies for economic growth in the SSLEP area (including sign-off of the major strategic documents such as, but not limited to, the Growth Deal, City Deal, ESIF, Enterprise Zone Implementation Plan and Strategic Economic Plan, Growth Hub Business Plan, which may be required by Government to be produced by SSLEP);
- developing strategies for the Partnership including a specific responsibility to ensure the wider engagement of businesses and other stakeholders in this process;
- developing proposals for the SSLEP's operating structure;
- working with partners to ensure that they are held accountable for the delivery of specific projects along with the overarching economic strategies, with special interest paid to the formal funding arrangements with Government, such as Growth Deal, City Deal, ESIF, Growth Hub and the Enterprise Zone.
- This will include:
  - o day to day oversight of the operational management arrangements;
  - o approving new projects, which are in line with delivering the SSLEP's economic strategy, opportunities and priorities in future applications to Government;
  - o ensuring that projects are delivered within the accountability framework agreed with Government.;
  - o agreeing strategic targets for all programmes, against which performance will be monitored in line with Government guidance; based on recommendations from the Audit and Finance Committee (AFC);

- o based on recommendations from the AFC determine how funds not captured in one of the three main programmes (e.g. Growing Places Fund/Core Funding) should be allocated;
- o determining strategic communications for all SSLEP programmes;
- o reporting at least twice a year to the SSLEP Partnership regarding delivery of the SSLEPs key programmes (such as the City Deal, Growth Deal, ESIF, Growth Hub, and Enterprise Zone);
- o identifying opportunities, and making arrangements, to work in partnership with neighbouring LEPs where priorities are shared and could be best implemented jointly. This includes but is not limited to, the Midlands Engine, the joint working arrangements with Cheshire and Warrington, Greater Birmingham and other LEPs;
- o identifying opportunities, and making arrangements, to influence Government and wider policy in pursuit of the SSLEP's priorities subject to ensuring that public expenditure is not incurred in retaining the services of lobbyists to influence public officials, Members of Parliament, political parties or the Government to take a view on any issue ; and
- o The Audit and Finance Committee will maintain and manage the overarching SSLEP-wide Risk Register and associated mitigation plan on behalf of the Executive Board.

2.3 Delegations/sub-groups (permanent & temporary)

From within the SSLEPs membership, the Executive Board shall appoint an Enterprise Zone Chair and an SME Champion.

The Chair of the Audit & Finance Committee will agree revenue budget expenditure in accordance with the allocations set out in the approved revenue budget finance plan.

2.4 Membership

The SSLEP Executive Board will be constituted as follows:

- Chair of the Board – Business – 1

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- Vice Chair of the Board – Business – appointed from within the membership of the SSLEP Executive Board
- Chair of the Strategic Programme Management Group - Business - 1
- Business Representatives (ideally the Chairs) of the permanent sub groups ESIFSC/Education Skills & Employment Group/Audit & Finance Group) – Business - 3
- Business lead for marketing and inward investment – Business - 1
- The Business Chair of the Destination Management Partnership – Business - 1
- 2 Representatives of each of the 2 Accountable Bodies (2 Elected Members / 2 Officers) - 4
- 2 District Council representatives (Leaders drawn from the four representatives on the Partnership nominated by the Staffordshire Leaders Group) – 2
- A business member or members will be nominated as SME Champion(s)
- Sector Champions – Business - 2
- A University representative - 1 (nominated by the universities)
- A representative of the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy will be invited to attend in an Observer capacity.

2.5   Timetabling/frequency
- The Executive Board will normally meet **eight times per year** and a minimum of **no less than six times a year.**

2.6   Representation & Attendance
- For the Executive Board to be quorate no fewer than **five** members must attend the meeting, provided that:
    o **at least three** of those five represent the business sector, and
    o **at least two** are Leaders of Local Authorities (with **at least one** representative from the two accountable bodies).
- Where the Executive Board is not quorate, business may proceed but decisions will be subject to confirmation by the majority of members present and voting at the next appropriate meeting provided always

that a quorum is present or, where more appropriate, by the Electronic Procedure (see Appendix 2).

- Each Member of the Executive Board can register one substitute to attend in their place.
  - o Business Members may name another business representative from the Partnership (ideally representing the same sub group).
  - o Substitutes must comply with the same requirements as members.
- Local Authority Executive Board Members who represent the Accountable Bodies may also name one substitute.
  - o Accountable Body Leaders should nominate another appropriate elected Member from their Local Authority.
  - o Local Authority Chief Executives should nominate an appropriate senior level officer from their Local Authority.
  - o District/Borough Council Leaders should nominate another District/Borough council Leader.
- Substitute members shall be able to take part in the meeting, including any decision making, with the same rights as an Executive Board Member.
- Details of substitution arrangements will be maintained by the Secretariat and only named substitutes, known to the Secretariat, may perform this function.
- Others relevant stakeholders may attend meetings and participate in discussion at the invitation of the Chair.
- Officers and members of the bodies participating in the SSLEP, but not invited to attend and participate, may attend as observers at the discretion of the Chair.

3. Executive Board – List of Permanent Sub Groups

The Executive Board may appoint Sub Groups to carry out specific functions within its remit on its behalf. These will be reviewed annually. The following Sub Groups are currently appointed:

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4. Strategic Programme Management Group (SPMG)

4.1 Purpose

The functions of the Strategic Programme Management Group (SPMG) will be to:

- maintain an overview of delivery of the City Deal, Growth Deals and Enterprise Zones;
- identify solutions to problems related to delivery of the programme and recommend actions to the SSLEP Executive Board;
- Maintain a forward look and advise the Executive Board on strategic issues and opportunities;
- Oversee the submission and review of Bids;
- Oversee the risk register and associated mitigation plans prepared by PAG.
- The SPMG does not make decisions but makes recommendations to the Executive Board.
- The Programme Assurance Group (PAG) will be a delegated sub-group of SPMG.

4.2 Timetabling/Frequency

The SPMG will meet **up to four times a year**.

4.3 Representation & Attendance

The Strategic Programme Management Group will consist of accountable delivery partners as identified below and will be chaired by a private sector member of the SSLEP Executive Board:

- SSLEP Executive Board business member (Chair and lead SSLEP member for Growth Deal);
- SSLEP Executive Board business member;
- Staffordshire County Council Director of Economy Infrastructure and Skills (or appropriate Deputy);

- Stoke-on-Trent City Council Director of Place, Growth & Prosperity (or appropriate Deputy).

The following representatives may attend in an advisory, non-voting capacity by invitation; examples include:
- BEIS or MHCLG representative;
- The City Deal and Growth Deal Programme Manager;
- The SSLEP Partnership Manager;
- S151 officers (or their representatives) from the relevant Accountable Bodies.

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6. Programme Assurance Group (PAG)

[A delegated sub group of SPMG]

6.1 Purpose

The functions of the Programme Assurance Group is to:

- Manage delivery of the City Deal, Growth Deals and Enterprise Zones through the monitoring of projects and their outcomes;

- report to the Executive Board and/or the Strategic Programme Management Group as appropriate on achievement of strategic targets, projects and timelines, make recommendations on business cases;

- maintain and manage a risk register and associated mitigation plan;

- propose strategic communications;

- identify and action solutions to problems related to delivery of the programme; and

- recommend cost re-profiling of projects where project costs are increasing beyond budget or where overspends and underspends are likely (in conjunction with the responsible delivery agent);

- Advise the Executive Board and Strategic Programme Management Group on strategic issues and opportunities;

- Maintain and monitor records and ensure the appropriate national returns are made accurately and in a timely manner;

- Support the preparation of bids in respect of the Growth Deal and make recommendations to the Executive Board;

- Liaise with BEIS/Cities and Local Growth Unit in respect of the Annual Conversation, ensure any actions arising are agreed and implemented and report the outcome of the conversation;

- Managing the appraisal and assessment of projects including the operation of project calls and making recommendations to the Executive Board and SPMG.

- Timetabling/Frequency: The PAG will meet at least four times a year.

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6.2 Representation & Attendance

The Programme Assurance Group will consist of accountable delivery partners and will be chaired by a member of the SSLEP Secretariat.

- Member of SSLEP Secretariat;
- Lead delivery agencies of individual projects within City Deal Growth Deal and Enterprise Zone:
  - Staffordshire County Council Commissioner for Business and the Enterprise County (or appropriate Deputy);
  - Stoke-on-Trent City Council Assistant Director of Place (or appropriate Deputy);
  - Skills Lead;
  - University Senior Officer (or appropriate Deputy)(Alternate to University represented at Executive Board;
  - District Council Delivery Partner Officer(s);
  - Growth Deal and City Deal Accountable Officers;
  - S151 officers (or their representatives) from the relevant Accountable Bodies.

The following may attend in an advisory capacity as required:

- BEIS or representative;
- MHCLG/Homes England representative;
- DWP;
- DEFRA;
- The City Deal and Growth Deal Programme Manager.

The membership of the group may grow as new Growth Deals are agreed, as it is essential that the delivery agencies accountable for specific projects are present at the meetings.

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7. ESIF Sub-Committee

7.1 Purpose

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire SSLEP European Strategic Investment Funds (ESIF) Sub-Committee is responsible for the strategic oversight of local investments of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF) and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD and their operational delivery in line with the Operational Programmes. It reports directly to the Executive Board.

The SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee is an integral part of the governance structure required to deliver the England 2014-2020 ERDF and ESF Programmes through its management of the SSLEP ESIF strategy and demonstrates England's commitment to delivery of ERDF and ESF Programmes and allocated EAFRD in the spirit of the partnership principle that is embedded in the Common Provisions Regulations.

Including:

- working with the Managing Authorities (MAs) in ensuring operational delivery of Structural Fund activity in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire;
  - o overseeing the development of an appropriate pipeline of project proposals for operations;
  - o making recommendations on investments at outline and full stages (to be approved by ESIF Sub-Committee prior to going to the Managing Authority for approval);
  - o Reporting progress and feeding in to national processes as directed by the UK Growth Programme Board as appropriate;
  - o monitoring performance at the level of the European Structural and Investment Framework; and
  - o overseeing cross LEP working with neighbouring and other LEP's especially for the joint working arrangements for the overlapping area with the Greater Birmingham LEP;
  - o maintaining and managing a risk register and associated mitigation plan.

7.2   Representation & Attendance

The sectors that need to be represented on the SSLEP Area Partnership are defined nationally as follows:

- Local Enterprise Partnership (Business Representative)
- Local Authority
- Private sector (this can include social enterprise)
- Voluntary & social partners
- Environment
- Trade Union & Equalities
- Education, skills & employment
- Rural representative where appropriate
- Managing Authority – MHCLG for European Regional Development Funds and DWP for European Social Funds.
- BEIS Local as advisors

7.3   Meetings and Papers

- The ERDF/ESF Managing Authority, MHCLG, will provide the secretariat for the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee, managing dates, venues, minute taking, recording decisions, collating and circulating papers, and publishing decisions working closely with the Sub-Committee and the Chair.
- The Secretariat will provide administrative support for the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee.
- The Secretariat will be drawn from either or both of the ERDF or ESF Managing Authority. In fulfilling this role it will work closely with the Sub-Committee and the Chair.

7.4   Responsibilities

Its responsibilities will include:

- Advising the Sub-Committee on governance arrangements;
- Organising meetings, preparing or commissioning agendas and papers for the meetings as agreed with the Chair and lead MA;
- Circulating papers and agendas in advance of meetings;

- Ensuring that all decisions of the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee are accurately recorded so that there is a clear audit trail;

- Writing minutes of all meetings of the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee, getting initial approval of the minutes from the Chair, distributing them to members and, once agreed, making them available on the public site;

- Briefing the Chair on any issues relating to discussions;

- Providing/commissioning the Management Information reports on behalf of the different Managing Authorities (standard reports) and/or the provision/commissioning of particular reports or papers for the Sub-committee;

- Supporting communication between the GPB and its national level sub-committees and the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee;

- Maintain a record of all the interests of the members of the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee. Acting as described within the Terms of Reference.

The Lead Managing Authority will be responsible for ensuring that the other MAs are consulted and have agreed papers as appropriate where these affect the administration of the different ESI Funds.

8. Education Skills and Employment Group (ESEG)

8.1 Purpose

The role of the Education Skills and Employment Group is to bring together business and the skills sector. It is responsible for securing delivery of the SSLEP Skills Strategy and its programme of activities and investments. The ESEG will provide a mechanism to bring together business and skills stakeholders on skills matters impacting on skills priorities in the SSLEP area and in developing strategies and plans to deliver these priorities. This includes securing influences on resources and agencies for delivering these priorities and acting as a strategic commissioner of skills provision. The ESEG will make recommendations on the strategic fit of skills projects and proposals to the Executive Board.

8.2 Remit/powers/decision-making

The ESEG will:

- Understand and communicate the current and future needs of our key sectors and businesses and ensure the skills providers meets those skills needs;
- provide a strong strategic influence and leadership within the region on education, training and employability by acting as a forum for organisations, including public sector bodies, private sector businesses and third sector organisations, schools, colleges and other education and training providers;
- maintain an overview of delivery of the SSLEP Skills Strategy and ensure feedback into future strategy development;
- monitoring of skills related projects and their outcomes;
- report to the Executive Board on delivery of the skills strategy and achievement of programme delivery milestones and outcomes, spend and targets;
- promote activities that seek to raise the achievement of pupils and students in education and training within the region;

- promote activities that seek to raise educational and training aspirations amongst young people, their families and advisors;
- work through local delivery bodies and support individual or groups of schools, colleges and other providers to raise student achievement and attainment;
- provide a network of contact for communications and mutual support between business, public sector, third sector and educational organisations; and
- seek to influence policy makers at national level of the needs and potential of education and training within the region to leverage resource to the delivery agents to support the achievement of its key purpose.
- Maintain and manage a risk register and associated mitigation plan.

8.3 Representation & Attendance

The Group will be constituted as follows:
- Chair - Senior Business Leader (1)
- Senior representatives of City and County Council (2)
- District Council representatives (2)
- City & County School Head teacher (2)
- City & County Employer/Business representatives (6)
- University Vice Chancellors (2)
- Training Provider Association (1)
- Chamber of Commerce (1)
- FE College Principals (1)
- Voluntary Community Sector representative (1)
- SPES representative (1)

The Group will be supported by a secretariat that will be responsible for communication coordination and reporting on programme performance and risk.

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9. Audit & Finance Committee (AFC)

9.1 Purpose

The Audit and Finance Committee (the Committee) will:

- maintain strategic oversight of all SSLEP led expenditure and investment to ensure that, taken together, it is coordinated and represents value for money and is complementary;

- provide assurance to the SSLEP that funds are being spent appropriately and in accordance with the conditions placed on each grant / funding stream;

- consider proposals for revenue expenditure;

- consider applications by businesses for assistance from non-SSLEP funding streams and recommend to the Executive Board whether they should be supported by the SSLEP;

- take on, as specifically delegated by the Executive Board, responsibility for making recommendations to Executive Board regarding expenditure of any funds or budgets not captured and managed elsewhere;

- identify and report on any potential future funding opportunities.

- Maintain and manage the AFC Risk Register and associated mitigation plan;

- Maintain and manage the overarching SSLEP wide Risk Register and associated mitigation plan on behalf of the Executive Board.

- Consideration of the SSLEP's annual accounts, ensure they are reported to the Executive every July and published on the SSLEP's website.

- Consideration of the SSLEP's Annual Audit report and ensure any recommendations are appropriately addressed and reported to the Executive.

- The AFC has responsibility for strategic oversight of all SSLEP-led expenditure and will report to the Executive Board on overall expenditure quarterly, and additionally if it identifies any specific issues which may require a decision from the Executive Board.

- Establishing overall SSLEP value for money will be the responsibility of the Chair of the AFC, supported by the S151 Officer.
- The AFC may delegate activity to individuals or sub groups.

9.2   Representation & Attendance

The Audit & Finance Committee will comprise:

- SSLEP Executive Board Member (Chair)
- 1 further Executive Board business member
- Co-opted Section 151 officers from the Accountable Bodies
- Local Authority External Funding Lead Officers
- Representatives from the City Deal and Growth Deal, EU/ESIF and ESEG sub-groups – with knowledge of the financial position of those programmes.
- The Chair may also invite, as appropriate, lead members from any of the task and finish groups which may be established to consider applications to SSLEP funding streams.

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10. Policy Advisory Groups

The SSLEP encourages the formation of thematic or sector specific Policy Advisory Groups and recognises that many such groups already exist and are operating successfully. As such, the SSLEP will not specifically establish such groups but does commit to engage with any groups in the following ways:

- The SSLEP will maintain a list of any relevant thematic or sector groups operating in the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire area, and ensure those groups (where they wish to be) are kept informed of SSLEP activity.

- The SSLEP will seek the views of relevant groups when developing, reviewing and refreshing its key strategies (e.g. the SEP / EU investment strategy).

- The SSLEP Executive Board will provide an opportunity at each meeting for thematic or sector groups to attend and discuss any issues or concerns they would like to bring to the SSLEP's attention and otherwise feed in the views of their membership on issues of relevance to the SSLEP.

- The SSLEP will not provide specific secretariat support to these groups (i.e. meeting arrangements / minutes / agendas etc.), however, recognising the important advisory role such groups will play, the SSLEP (through its Secretariat) will endeavour to provide support to these groups if requested: for example, by:
  - assisting an individual to get a group started;
  - assisting with accommodation for meetings; or
  - providing information.

11. Task and Finish Groups

- The Executive Board, and its sub-groups, may choose to delegate specific functions to task and finish groups, each of which will require specific terms of reference.

- The Executive Board, and its sub groups, may only delegate functions for which they have responsibility and may wish to set parameters within which such groups may operate.

- It is anticipated that the Executive Board may particularly wish to exercise this option when in a 'negotiating' phase with government – when a lean and responsive group is needed to respond to tight timescales issued by Government in determining the detail of specific funding deals.

- Consideration will need to be given to the appropriate membership of such groups.

- All external appointments will be made in accordance with SSLEP Constitution and specifically the Commissioner of Public Appointments Governance Code (December 2016).

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11. PROTOCOLS

12.1 **Cross LEP Working**

There will be occasions when the SSLEP may wish to work in partnership with other LEPs, in particular those with which it shares borders. This cross-working might relate to a specific, time-limited, project or may be more general in nature.

Whenever the SSLEP is involved in specific joint working it will develop project and/or partner specific joint working protocols. These will be bespoke to the collaboration in question; however, the following components will be included in all joint-working agreements:

- Detail of the shared aims and objectives of the project / partners.

- An agreed set of shared values and ways of working, including, for example; commitment to delivering value for money and minimising duplication; being open and honest and sharing information; a recognition of the rights and responsibilities of all partners; and embracing best practice, learning and experience.

- Detail of the specific roles, responsibilities and commitments of partners, in the delivery of the aims and objectives of the collaboration.

- Specific detail of any formal joint decision making structures and how they fit with each partner's own governance arrangements, in particular this will make clear who is accountable for decision making and delivery.

- Individual joint working agreements will form part of the SSLEP's Assurance Framework and will, therefore, be made available on the SSLEP's website.

The SSLEP Executive Board will have responsibility for agreeing specific joint working arrangements, and signing off any protocols and agreements.

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12.2 **Transparency Engagement and Scrutiny**

- The SSLEP will comply with the relevant best practice guidance.[1]

- The SSLEP will engage with business through its participation in business networks, local events, the work of the Growth Hub and supporting programmes including local pop up sessions, and an Annual Conference open to all. The Board and SME lead will maintain an overview of these activities and ensure that they are effective.

- The SSLEPs website contains copies of the SEP, Annual Report and Accounts, business cases and short progress reports.

- In relation to the agendas and minutes of the SSLEP's decision-making bodies, these will be made available to the public via publication on the SSLEP's website, in accordance with timescales set out in the relevant legislation relating to Local Authorities and Best Practice guidance.

- The SSLEP will ensure that any request for information under the Freedom of Information Act or Environmental Information Regulations 2004, are dealt with in line with requirements placed on the Accountable Body as a public sector organisation.

- The SSLEP has a separate enquiries, compliments and complaints policy, which is published on the website.
  - The SSLEP will maintain a secure form reporting for third party complaints, in order to:
    - provide assurance on confidentiality
    - Offer secure form reporting
    - Provide a clear point of contact
  - And will set out a clear response timetable

- The SSLEP will be subject to independent scrutiny by Members of the constituent Local Authorities. The Scrutiny Committees with delegated responsibility to scrutinise the SSLEP at Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council will, at least annually, conduct a joint meeting to hold the SSLEP to account on delivery of the Strategic Economic Plan.

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[1] Local Enterprise Partnership governance and transparency guidance – January 2018; Local Enterprise Partnership – National Assurance Framework – November 2016

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- Each District and Borough Council that is a member of the SSLEP will be invited to send an appropriate representative (most likely a Scrutiny Member involved in scrutiny of economic regeneration).

- Arrangements for the meeting will be managed by the Scrutiny Teams at SCC and SOTCC on a rotating basis. Details of the meeting will be publicised on the Councils' websites in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, and will also be made available on the SSLEP website.

- The SSLEP Chair, or appropriate substitute, will prepare a report for the meeting and will be required to attend to respond to questions and issues raised. The SSLEP Chair, or appropriate substitute, may request that additional SSLEP Executive Board Members also attend the meeting if required.

- In addition, individual member Local Authorities will be free to scrutinise projects and activities which impact on economic regeneration within their area.

12.3 Rules of Conduct and Appointment of Members

- The Partnership and Executive Board Members (where they are not ex-officio) will be appointed via an open application process that affirms a commitment to diversity and equal opportunities for all. Members may be appointed for up to two consecutive, three-year terms. All appointments will be made in accordance with the provisions of the **Governance Code on Public Appointments (December 2016***)*.

- Arrangements for advertising and recruiting Business Board Members will be delegated to the Secretariat, with all appointments to be made by the Chair and formally signed off by the Partnership. Members who represent Local Authorities may fulfil the role for as long as they hold the relevant elected or executive position within the named organisation.

- All members will be required to sign a code of conduct - https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/app/uploads/2018/02/Code-of-Conduct-for-LEP-Board-Members-February-2018.pdf and complete a register of interests before they participate in any decision making.

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12.4 Accountable Body Statement

- The SSLEP will ensure that there is an accountable body agreement in place with Staffordshire County Council who manage all financial matters on behalf of the SSLEP. Responsibilities of the Accountable body include:

  o Provision of financial advice and support to the SSLEP, including reporting regularly to the Executive on the financial position of the SSLEP.

  o Ensuring that funding is used appropriately and in accordance with the aims of the SSLEP and relevant legislation.

  o Ensuring compliance with the Assurance framework

  o Holding the funding and making payments in accordance with the decisions of the SSLEP

  o Ensuring grant recipients enter into a funding agreement and comply with the conditions of that agreement.

  o Ensuring arrangements are in place for audit of the SSLEP activities equivalent to those in place for local authority spend

  o Production of the final accounts of the SSLEP

    ▪ SCC accounts (as the Accountable Body) will be finished and audited by 31 July each year.

- In the event that the accountable body does not comply with a decision of the SSLEP, and the matter cannot be resolved directly by the Parties, such dispute shall be referred to a senior officer nominated by each of the Parties who will use all reasonable endeavours to resolve the dispute. Any such joint resolution shall be a final determination of the dispute. If joint resolution is not met then mediation between the SSLEP Chair and Accountable Body Chief Executive would prevail. If the conflict remains unresolved all parties will agree to appoint an independent person(s) to assist the SSLEP and the accountable bodies to resolve the matter.

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12.5 Risk Management Statement

- The Audit & Finance Committee will maintain and manage the overarching SSLEP-wide risk register and associated mitigation plan on behalf of the Executive Group.
- Each permanent sub-group is responsible for owning its own Risk Register and associated mitigation plan.
- The named individual responsible for "Risk" on behalf of the SSLEP will be the Chair of the Audit & Finance Committee.

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APPENDICES:

Appendix 1	**Decision Making**
Appendix 2	**Electronic Procedure (Decision Making)**
Appendix 3	**Register of Interests**
Appendix 4	**Representation & Attendance**
Appendix 5	**Whistleblowing**
Appendix 6	**Meetings & Papers**
Appendix 7	**Marking Scheme**
Appendix 8	**Operating Structure**
Appendix 9	**Diversity**

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Appendix 1

Decision Making

General [Applies to all]

- Notice of all matters which are to be discussed at a meeting will be by way of circulating the meeting agenda to members **five clear working days** in advance of the meeting. Matters on which a decision is to be taken must be specifically referred to in the agenda. Consequently, matters which arise for discussion and decision from any other business shall be deferred to the next meeting unless there is an unavoidable need to deal with that matter without delay. Whether or not a matter is unavoidable shall be determined by those present on the day of the meeting, decided by simple majority vote (provided a quorum is present).

- By exception documents which are not circulated with the agenda may be circulated with shorter or no notice, with the agreement of the Chair. Decisions arising from this process shall not be taken unless in accordance with the preceding paragraph in relation to urgency.

- In the event that a decision is required outside of a scheduled meeting the Chair may decide to hold an additional meeting, this will have a minimum notice period of 5 working days.

- Alternatively, the Chair may decide to seek agreement to a proposal via the **Electronic Procedure**. (See Appendix 2)

Partnership

- Decisions will only be made if the Partnership is Quorate. Once in this position the Partnership shall operate on a basis of consensus.

- In the event that a consensus cannot be achieved on a matter requiring a decision, that decision shall be taken by vote and carried if it is supported by over 50% of those members present. Each Partnership member shall have one vote and the Chair shall have a casting vote if required. For the avoidance of doubt, members with a conflict of interest **shall not** vote (see **Appendix 3** Register of Interests).

- The Partnership may also delegate specific decisions to the Chair following a meeting, for example if some additional action is required on an item

which has been discussed at the meeting. Where the Chair receives a specific delegation any decision must be :

- o Recorded, stored by the Secretariat, and published on the SSLEP website; and
- o Ratified at the next meeting of the Partnership, provided a quorum is present.

Executive Board

- Decisions of the Executive Board will be taken by consensus wherever possible. In the event that a consensus cannot be achieved on a matter requiring decision, that decision shall be taken by a vote and carried if it is supported by over 50% of those present.

- Each Executive Board member shall have one vote and the Chair shall have a casting vote if required. For the avoidance of doubt, members with a conflict of interest or who have not completed a code of conduct or register of interests shall not vote.

- The Executive Board may also delegate specific decisions to the Chair following a meeting, for example if some additional action is required on an item which has been discussed at the meeting. Where the Chair receives a specific delegation any decision must be :
  - o Recorded, stored by the Secretariat, and published on the SSLEP website; and
  - o Ratified at the next meeting of the Executive Board, provided a quorum is present.

Strategic Programme Management Group

- This group **will not** be making decisions on behalf of the SSLEP. Where the group identifies problems related to delivery of the programme and is required to find solutions the decision making power will rest with the delivery organisation.

- Where overspend or underspends are identified and/or changes to the programme are required the Strategic Programme Management Group will make recommendations to the SSLEP Executive Board for their decision.

- This Group is required to make **quarterly** reports to the Executive Board regarding the overall delivery of the programme.   The Strategic

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Programme Management Group may delegate activity to individuals or other groups.

Programme Assurance Group

- As this group **is not** expected to take decisions on behalf of the SSLEP it does not need to meet specific quorum requirements.
- There are no formal substitution arrangements, however substitutes should be 'suitable' i.e. represent the same organisation as the person they are in attendance for and have appropriate knowledge, experience and decision making authority within their organisation.
- Where the group identifies problems related to delivery of the programme and is required to find solutions the decision making power will rest with the delivery organisation.
- Where over spend or underspends are identified and/or changes to the programme are required the Assurance Group will advise on the recommendations to be made to the SSLEP Executive Board for their decision.
- The Programme Assurance Group will be required to make **quarterly** reports to the Strategic Programme Management Group and Executive Board regarding the overall delivery of the programme.

Audit & Finance Committee

- As this group is **not expected to take decisions** on behalf of the SSLEP it does not need to meet specific quorum requirements.
- It will make recommendations to the Executive Board regarding both:
  - o support for applications by businesses for non SSLEP funding streams ensuring that the use of resources are subject to the normal Local Authority checks and balances, including value for money and compliance with legal requirements e.g. state aid; and
  - o expenditure of specific SSLEP managed funds that do not fall within the City Deal, Growth Deal or EU programmes (e.g. Growing Places Fund / Core Funding).
- Members of this group may send substitutes to their meetings if required. There are no formal substitution arrangements, however substitutes should be 'suitable' i.e. represent the same organisation as the person

they are in attendance for (Local Authority Finance / SSLEP Business Board Member).

Education Skills & Employment Group

- The ESEG **will not** be making decisions on behalf of the SSLEP but will make recommendations to the Executive Board.

- Where the group identifies issues related to the delivery of the skills elements of the SSLEP's key strategic documents and is required to find solutions it is expected that decision making power will rest with either: the delivery organisation; or the SSLEP Executive Board.

- The ESEG will be expected to make **quarterly reports** to the SSLEP Executive Board regarding delivery of the skills delivery plan objectives and outcomes secured.

ESIF Sub-Committee [ESIFSC]

- Decisions will be taken by consensus; by exception dissent from a majority decision will be recorded in the minutes (the **Chair does not hold a deciding vote** where consensus is not reached).

- Where the Committee is unable to reach a consensus or is not acting in accordance with the Terms of Reference or the Code of Conduct, such that members wish to escalate this to the Growth Programme Board (PMC), the national level [Performance management] Sub-Committee will be the mechanism for resolving such disputes.

- All meetings and decisions will be minuted. Minutes will normally be circulated no later than 10 working days after a meeting for approval by members (with a nil response taken as endorsement). Minutes will be agreed by the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee as confirmation of a true record of a meeting.

- Members must be able to attend regularly and be able to devote necessary time to any preparatory work. Members missing more than 30% of meetings in a twelve month period or three meetings in a row may be asked to step down by the MA in its role as Secretariat after consultation with the Chair.

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- Recommendations of the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee in relation to individual investments remain confidential until such time as the MA informs members that a formal decision has been made.
- To be undertaken in accordance with Government guidance.

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Appendix 2

Electronic Procedure (Decision Making)

- In this text the term "committee" is deemed to cover Board, Committee, Panel or sub-Committee, etc.
- Where the Chair of a committee has decided to seek agreement to a proposal via the **Electronic Procedure** the following process shall be implemented:
    - In such cases, the Secretariat shall write to each member of that committee requesting agreement to a specified course of action.
    - Committee Members shall be given no fewer than five clear working days to respond, unless a decision is required urgently, which in relation to the Electronic Procedure, will be determined by the Chair in conjunction with the Vice Chair.
    - For a decision to be taken, the number of members participating and the composition of those members must be the same as for a quorate meeting and over 50% of those participating must agree to the course of action. All decisions made by Electronic Procedure shall be ratified at the next scheduled meeting of the relevant group, provided a quorum is present.
    - The relevant committee may also delegate specific decisions to the Chair following a meeting, for example if some additional action is required on an item which has been discussed at a meeting. Where the Chair receives a specific delegation any decision must be:
        - recorded, stored by the Secretariat, and published on the SSLEP's website; and
        - ratified at the next meeting of the relevant committee, provided a quorum is present.

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Appendix 3

Register of Interests

For the avoidance of doubt, this covers all members, participants in SSLEP meetings and key members of staff, and includes the expected personal Code of Conduct and anything that may construed as Conflicts of Interest.

Board Members are required to complete a Register of Interests before participating in any decisions as set out in the "Local Enterprise Partnership governance and transparency: best practice guidance" - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-enterprise-partnership-governance-and-transparency-best-practice-guidance

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Appendix 4

Representation & Attendance

GENERAL:

Member(s) of the Secretariat will attend Partnership meetings in order to:

- take minutes;
- provide any information requested by the Partnership at earlier meetings; and
- provide any other support required by the Chair.

Common rules for:

- **SPMG**
- **PAG**
- **ESEG**
- **AFC**

1. As these groups are **not** expected to take decisions on behalf of the SSLEP they do not need to meet specific quorum requirements.
2. Members of these groups may send substitutes to meetings if required.
3. There are no formal substitution arrangements, however substitutes should be 'suitable' i.e. represent the same organisation as the person they are in attendance for and have appropriate decision making authority within their organisation.

SPECIFIC:

Partnership

- Each partner organisation should ideally be represented with a separate individual to minimise potential conflicts of interest.
- Members may represent more than one grouping in agreement with the SSLEP and the Managing Authority.
- All partners selected should be representative of their sector and/or relevant stakeholders and able to demonstrate accountability to their constituencies.

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- The Membership recruitment process will be led by the SSLEP with involvement of partners and agreement of the Managing Authorities. The process will be consistent with the good practices and principles in the European Code of Conduct on Partnership and should encourage the nomination of a diversity of representatives reflective of the cultural, ethnic, age and gender mix of the population.

ESIF Sub-Committee

- Each partner should ideally be represented with a separate individual to minimise potential conflicts of interest. Members may represent more than one grouping in agreement with the SSLEP and the Managing Authority. All partners selected should be representative of their sector and/or relevant stakeholders and able to demonstrate accountability to their constituencies.

- The Membership recruitment process will be led by the SSLEP with involvement of partners and agreement of the Managing Authorities. The process will be consistent with the good practices and principles in the European Code of Conduct on Partnership and should encourage the nomination of a diversity of representatives reflective of the cultural, ethnic, age and gender mix of the population.

- Membership will be for a three year term. Where members leave before that time, representatives will be sought again from the sector/organisation they are representing.

- Membership will also be refreshed as needed to reflect any changes in relevant EU and national regulations (and policy) as directed by the PMC. By agreement with the Chair the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee will invite expert guidance to specific meetings to assist consideration of a specialist proposal.

- The Chair will be selected from amongst members of the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee by consensus. The SSLEP will organise the selection process, supported by the Managing Authority. In the absence of a candidate or in the absence of a consensus decision being reached the ERDF or ESF Managing Authority will undertake the role of Chair until such a consensus is reached at which time the consensus candidate will take office and the

ERDF or ESF Managing Authority representative will stand down into the Deputy Chair role.

- The Committee Chair will be chosen by a simple majority vote taken by the SSLEP **-** ESIF Sub-Committee in a quorate session and will chair the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee from the moment that majority vote for election is achieved. Unless elected as chair, the MA acting chair will step down into the Deputy Chair role

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Appendix 5

Whistleblowing

Concerns from stakeholders, members of the public or internal whistle-blowers will be addressed in accordance with the policy that can be found at https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/app/uploads/2018/02/Whistleblowing-policy-February-2018.pdf

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Appendix 6

Meetings & Papers

Summary of timings – applies to ALL SSLEP meetings:

- Giving Notice of items for inclusion on an agenda - 10 working days prior to the meeting

- Issues of Papers - 5 working days prior to the meeting

- Minutes issued (in draft) - 5 working days after the meeting

- Minutes ratified - At next meeting of the group

GENERAL:

The agenda and papers for meetings will be coordinated by the Secretariat and approved by the Chair, and members of the relevant panel may request that items are added.

- Panel members wishing to propose items for the agenda should contact the Secretariat at least ten clear working days prior to the meeting. Ordinarily such items will be added to the agenda for the next meeting unless at specific direction from the Chair who shall provide reasons to the proposing Board Member.

- The Secretariat will issue an agenda and papers for meetings at least 5 clear working days in advance of that meeting which will be made available for public inspection through publication on the SSLEP's website.

- Documents which are not circulated with the agenda may be circulated with shorter or no notice, with the agreement of the Chair. Decisions arising from this process shall not be taken unless in accordance with the protocols in Appendix 1 – General - in relation to urgency.

- Some papers will not be suitable for release into the public domain, due to them containing personal information about individuals or commercially sensitive data. Any reports which are not published will be stored by the Secretariat. However in this instance a summary decision notice will still be posted on the SSLEP's Website. If necessary, the decision regarding whether an item should be considered confidential will be made with

reference to the categories of Confidential and Exempt Information set out in the Local Government Act 2000 and any later amendments to that Act.

- Member(s) of the Secretariat will attend meetings in order to:
  - take minutes; record decisions; update and circulate Action Lists
  - provide any information requested at earlier meetings; and
  - provide any other support required by the Chair.
- Minutes of meetings shall be approved in draft form by the Chair and disseminated to members following the meeting. Minutes shall remain draft until approval at the next meeting.
- Minutes shall be made publically available on the SSLEP website following approval, except for minutes which are not suitable for release in the public domain, for example due to them containing personal information about individuals or commercially sensitive data. Any minutes which are not published will be stored by the Secretariat.
- The Secretariat will maintain and publish a schedule/diary of meetings, including:
  - the date for notification of agenda items,
  - the date for receipt of update reports,
  - the date for issue of agendas & papers,
  - the date for issue of draft minutes,
  - the date for publication of authorised minutes.
- The Secretariat will maintain a central electronic store of all paperwork pertaining to SSLEP meetings including, but not limited to: agendas; minutes; terms of reference; register of interests; and a record of decisions taken outside meetings.

SPECIFIC:

ESIF Sub-Committee: Specific arrangements:

Meetings and Papers

The ERDF/ESF Managing Authority will provide the secretariat for the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee, managing dates, venues, minute taking, recording decisions and collating and circulating papers, working closely with the Committee and the Chair.

The Secretariat will provide administrative support for the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee.

The Secretariat will be drawn from either or both of the ERDF or ESF Managing Authority. In fulfilling this role it will work closely with the Group and the Chair. Its responsibilities will include:

- Advising the Group on governance arrangements.

- Organising meetings, preparing or commissioning agendas and papers for the meetings as agreed with the Chair and lead MA.

- Circulating papers and agendas in advance of meetings.

- Ensuring that all decisions of the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee are accurately recorded so that there is a clear audit trail.

- Writing minutes of all meetings of the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee, getting initial approval of the minutes from the Chair, distributing them to members and, once agreed, making them available on the public site.

- Briefing the Chair on any issues relating to discussions.

- Providing/commissioning the Management Information reports on behalf of the different Managing Authorities (standard reports) and/or the provision/commissioning of particular reports or papers for the committee.

- Supporting the Chair, Group and MA (in their role as Chair or Deputy Chair) in communicating progress and feeding in to national processes as directed by the Growth Programme Board (PMC) and, where relevant, the EAFRD PMC.

- Supporting communication between the GPB and its national level sub-committees and the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee.

- Maintain a record of all the interests of the members of the SSLEP ESIF Sub-Committee. Acting as described within the Terms of Reference.

- The Lead Managing will be responsible for ensuring that the other MAs are consulted and have agreed papers as appropriate where these affect the administration of the different ESI Funds.

Appendix 7 – Marking Scheme

Marking Scheme

- All documents produced by or on behalf of SSLEP will be allocated a classification which determines their circulation restriction.
- The document marking scheme is as noted in the diagram below:

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP – Document Marking Scheme – February 2018
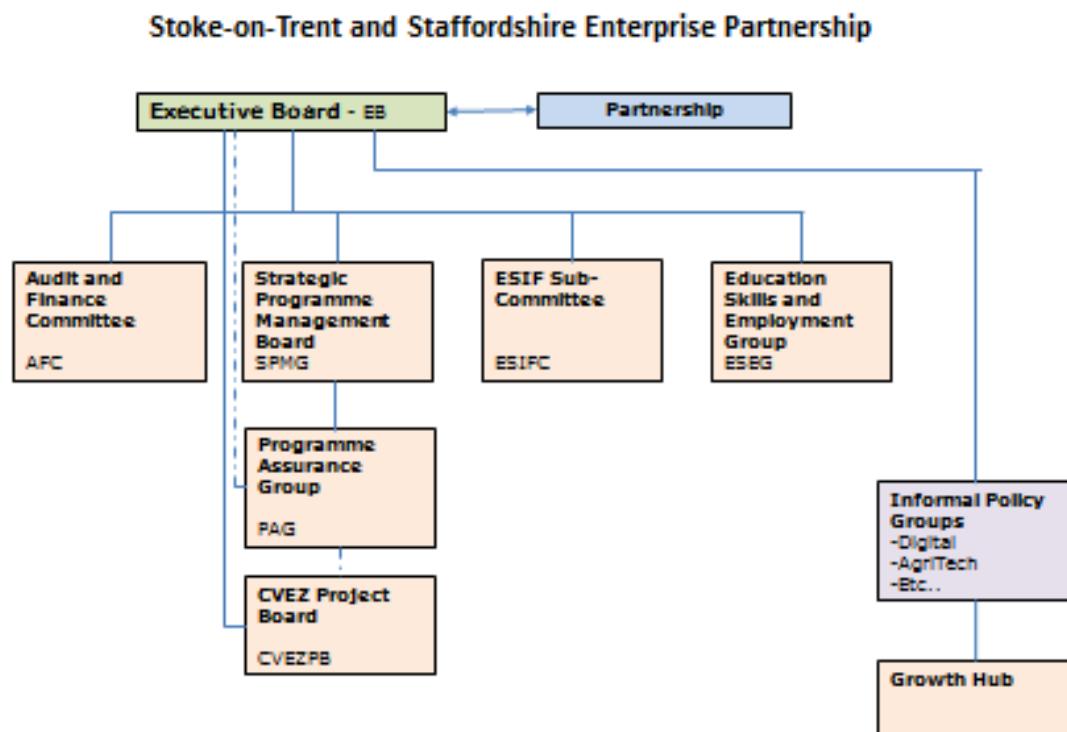
Level	Classification	Definition
1	Public	This is meant for documents that would have no restriction at all and no level of security requirement. Very often the intention of creating such documents would be to publish them. Often informative by their nature.
2	SSLEP Use	Information not approved for general release outside SSLEP. This information if lost may not result in financial loss or damage the image of the SSLEP but may lead to misunderstanding or misinterpretation of its content without a context and therefore should not be automatically released
3	Restricted	This will be information that should not be readily accessible to the public or to all staff. Release of this information may cause distress to individuals, affect operational matters, undermine the delivery of services. This information would require explicit authority to be shared outside its restrictions or removed from the SSLEP.
4	Confidential	Highly sensitive internal documents which may cause serious damage to the SSLEP if released may place people or assets at risk. This information should be afforded the highest sensitivity and security and would require the explicit authority of a senior manager to be used outside the restriction that would be placed upon it

Information handled by the SSLEP will be managed in accordance with the above process. Where SSLEP holds "confidential information" under "The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012". This includes:

- Information provided by a government department on terms which forbid the disclosure of the information to the public;
- Where disclosure to the public is prohibited by a court or;
- Where the Local Enterprise Partnership holds "exempt information" under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. This includes information relating to an individual, relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person, negotiations, labour relations, legal professional privilege and in connection to the investigation or prosecution of a crime.

Such information will be marked in accordance with the above table.

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Appendix 8 – Operating Structure

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Enterprise Partnership

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                    ┌─────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ Executive Board - EB │ ◄────► │     Partnership     │
                    └─────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────┘

┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
│ Audit and    │  │ Strategic    │  │ ESIF Sub-    │  │ Education    │
│ Finance      │  │ Programme    │  │ Committee    │  │ Skills and   │
│ Committee    │  │ Management   │  │              │  │ Employment   │
│              │  │ Board        │  │              │  │ Group        │
│ AFC          │  │ SPMG         │  │ ESIFC        │  │ ESEG         │
└──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘

                  ┌──────────────┐
                  │ Programme    │
                  │ Assurance    │
                  │ Group        │              ┌──────────────────┐
                  │              │              │ Informal Policy  │
                  │ PAG          │              │ Groups           │
                  └──────────────┘              │ -Digital         │
                                                │ -AgriTech        │
                  ┌──────────────┐              │ -Etc..           │
                  │ CVEZ Project │              └──────────────────┘
                  │ Board        │
                  │              │              ┌──────────────────┐
                  │ CVEZPB       │              │  Growth Hub      │
                  └──────────────┘              └──────────────────┘
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Appendix 9 – Diversity Policy

Diversity Policy

Introduction

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP promotes a diverse area and communities, and we believe that it is important that we reflect this diversity. To ensure we do as much as we can to achieve this, our approach is detailed below.

No-one should be discriminated against because of their race, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, or receive any other form of discrimination that hinders the promotion of equal opportunities.

The partnership aims to be consistent with the Codes of Practice on Employment and advice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Employment Issues

a)   Recruitment & Selection

Our policy in conjunction with those of the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce and Local Authority employers is to select people on the basis of their suitability for the role, as defined by a properly constructed job description and person specification.

Vacancies will be advertised to the widest possible audience and will utilise sources that ensure that all sections of the community have the opportunity to apply. However this does not stop the partnership from restricting recruitment advertising in certain situations (e.g. in a redundancy situation; where the role requires particular specialist skills which can only be found from a specific source; or where the same or similar position has been advertised in the immediate past).

Applications will be monitored to ensure that they reflect the wider community.

All job adverts will reflect the equal opportunities policies of the employing bodies.

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Shortlisting for interview will be done in accordance with the defined criteria and all managers will receive guidance and information in interviewing skills and recruitment legislation before undertaking interviews. Notes will be taken for all interviews and retained for a period after the selection process.

We will consider flexible working arrangements, where operationally feasible, to allow as many people as possible the opportunity to work for us

b)   Training and Promotion

Decisions on training, promotion and other employment matters will be based on organisational need and non-discriminatory procedures. We will also, where appropriate, use the provisions of the Equality Act to undertake "positive action" training to ensure that underrepresented groups are fully represented in our workforce.

c)   General conduct at work

All staff will be expected to ensure that they comply with the principles of this policy. We will strive to ensure that the LEP has a positive working atmosphere where no member of staff, customer or client is the subject of belittlement, insult or offensive remarks. Any employee who breaches this will be subject to disciplinary action, which may in very serious cases be considered as gross misconduct and lead to dismissal.

Please remember that it is the impact of any comments or behaviour on the recipient that is important, not the intention of the person who makes the comments or behaves in a particular way.

d)   Remuneration

We will ensure that its criteria for determining employees' pay are consistent with the Equal Pay Act 1970.

Publicity/Advertising

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Publicity materials will not only emphasise that our services and job opportunities are available to all, but will utilise all appropriate media to ensure that all sections of the community can access the information.

Review

We will review this policy and any procedures arising from it in the light of changes to legislation, case law or other guidance issued.

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