

**Notes of the LEP Company Executive Board Meeting
Drawing Room, County Buildings
Wednesday 17th April 2019
DRAFT Minutes**

Board Members

David Frost (Chairman)
Alun Rogers (Vice Chair)
Wendy Dean
James Leavesley
Prof Liz Barnes

risual
Strategi Solutions
Leavesley Group
Staffordshire University

Advisory/Secretariat

Jacqui Casey
Alison Thomas
John Devlin

Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP
Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP
Consultant

In Attendance

Paul Farmer
Cllr Mark Winnington
Cllr Abi Brown
Phil Cresswell
Cllr Brian Edwards
Andrea Whitworth
Simon Ablewhite
Tom Bennett

Wade Ceramics
Cabinet member, Economic Growth, Staffordshire County Council
Deputy Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Leader, South Staffordshire Council
BEIS
Accountable Body
Amey Consulting

Apologies

Cllr Patrick Farrington

Leader, Stafford Borough Council

1. Introductions

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted a letter from Paul Farmer agreeing to become a director of the Board. The chairman requested board endorsement of the appointment, which was agreed.

2. Apologies

These were noted.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Highways England M54-M6 Improvement Scheme

The meeting heard a presentation from Tom Bennett of Amey Consulting on progress on Highways England's M54-M6 improvement scheme and the impending preferred route consultation, due to start on 24th May and run until 5th July. Following this, a decision under the Development Control Order planning process was expected by Spring 2021 and, if

approved, construction work would start in Autumn 2021. There would be a three-year construction period.

Members welcomed progress but expressed concern at the length of time it had taken to bring the scheme forward.

CLlr Mark Winnington said the scheme had been in preparation for 10 years and said it was disappointing that the consultation process had not yet completed.

CLlr Brian Edwards asked for assurances that construction would be coordinated with other potential infrastructure projects in the South Staffordshire area to minimise traffic disruption.

The chairman said the long-awaited link between the M54 and M6 would be an important improvement to a major strategic highway and would boost the economy and productivity. The business community was keen to see speedy progress.

The board agreed to ask for further information from Highways England on the feasibility of extending the new link road to connect with the M6 Toll as well as the M6.

Tom Bennett left the meeting.

5. Notes of the previous meetings and matters arising

The minutes of the 14th February board meeting and the 7th March extraordinary board meeting were both approved.

Two decisions made by electronic procedure on 28th March 2019 were noted:

- a. Growing Places Fund award – Scott AM
- b. LEP staff contract extensions.

6. Chairman's delegated decisions and actions

- The chairman reported that he had written letters of support for Staffordshire University's and Keele University's University Enterprise Zone bids.
- Implementation of the LEP Review remained unresolved because SSLEP had been unable to reach agreement with GBSLEP on overlapping geographical boundaries, which the Government requires be removed. It had been expected that Government would make a determination on the issue, but ministers had now written to both LEPs and asked them to resolve the issue themselves by the end of April.

The chairman said he had met the chair of GBSLEP, but each side had maintained its position of wishing to retain the southern and eastern Staffordshire districts. The two LEPs were preparing a framework for future collaboration but this could not be implemented until a decision was made on geography.

The chairman said the end of April deadline was unrealistic because local elections were taking place in May and it would not be possible to meet district council leaders until their new administrations were in place following the elections. Meetings were unlikely to take place until late May. He expressed concern at continuing delay which was affecting the ability to reach decisions on LEP development, future funding and recruitment of board members from across the full geography. He said a Government decision was required.

Andrea Whitworth said she would feed back information to Government on the obstacles to meaningful discussion presented by the local elections.

- SSLEP would continue planning for the future, including reviewing staffing and structures to ensure the organisation was fit for purpose.

It was agreed to put together a small group of board members, with officer input, to examine future responsibilities, structures and funding needs so that the LEP could move swiftly once the boundaries issue was resolved. It was agreed that there would be an interim report to the next board meeting.

7. City & Growth Deal Programme

The board received the project update report and noted good progress on the schemes in the programme.

Decision: The board approved a further open call for the Growing Places Fund.

The Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Hub project evaluation report was received and noted.

Decision: The Ceramic Valley Strategic Implementation Plan 2019/20 was endorsed.

The Ceramic Valley quarterly report was noted.

CLlr Abi Brown reported economic resurgence with development activity on five of the six Ceramic Valley sites and Tunstall Arrow phase 1 now fully let. The focus was now on achieving more higher-value jobs.

The board discussed issues including low GVA and measures the LEP could take to encourage more high-skill opportunities, analyse the skills profile of the existing workforce, improve the supply of good quality office space for professional services and business headquarters relocations, encourage start-ups and improve the area's cultural and housing offer. It was noted that these issues would be addressed in the development of the Local Industrial Strategy.

8. Key Performance Indicators

The KPIs were noted.

9. LEP Review

Decision: Updates to the Assurance Framework were approved.

The work programme for the LEP Review was noted.

10. LEP Annual Performance Review 2018

The chairman reported that the LEP had scored well on delivery but some improvements were required in governance and strategy and an improvement plan was being put in place. A report was also expected shortly from a randomly-selected 'deep dive' by the CLGU compliance team.

The board noted the content of the report and agreed to receive the Deep Dive Audit Report and agreed combined Action Plan at the 14th May Board meeting.

Decision: It was agreed to plan a special half-day event for the board in July or August to look at refreshing LEP sub-groups to dovetail with emerging Local Industrial Strategy priorities and how to measure impact and outcomes against strategy, as well as activity.

11 Sub and Policy Group Updates

Investment Update:

The end of year figures for 2018/19 showed that Make It Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire have assisted 18 companies in creating/safeguarding 1,572 jobs (1,197 created and 375 safeguarded) towards the annual target of 2,000 jobs. The team also records details of

investments and jobs created/safeguarded by businesses where there has been no assistance provided. Although not comprehensive, when combined with those assisted this gives a total of 2,058 jobs and 29 companies.

A presentation and report on activities and outcomes from MIPIM 2019 will be provided at the next board meeting on 14th May 2019. This will also include an outline of potential plans for MIPIM 2020.

The inward investment report was noted.

Growth Hub Update:

From 1st April 2014 to 5th March 2019 the Growth Hub had achieved the following:

- 6,616 businesses engaged with the Growth Hub Advisors
- 9,746 referrals made for businesses by the Hub Advisors
- 9,349 businesses engaged with the Business Helpline
- 10,237 signposts made for businesses by the Business Helpline
- 2,204 businesses assisted from the manufacturing sector
- 1,229 businesses assisted from the Information & Communication Sector
- 1,348 three-hour Business Diagnostics undertaken by the Hub Advisors

The Growth Hub runs a small grant scheme which assists businesses with the purchase of capital equipment and machinery that will help them to grow their business. From the scheme launch in November 2016 up to 28th February 2019 all the £811,000 funding pot of up to £10,000 per business had been allocated to Staffordshire businesses. To date 135 new jobs had been promised in return for the grants.

The Growth Hub report was noted. Jacqui Casey invited board members to consider having a presence on the Growth Hub Steering Group and to chair it in future. This forms part of the LEP sub-group refresh work.

12. Any other Business

James Leavesley reported that six businesses based in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire would be receiving Queen's Awards for Enterprise in the 2019 awards round.

Cllr Abi Brown reported that Stoke-on-Trent's Transforming Cities Fund bid had been shortlisted. Phil Cresswell said the city was also working with the National Infrastructure Commission, which would be holding its next meeting at Staffordshire University on 25th April.

The chairman said that he had recently toured the Stoke Station area and was impressed by the city's and university's plans to transform the area around the station and the scale of opportunity this presented.

Jacqui Casey reminded members of the LEP Network's Women Leaders Conference on 6th June, to which women board members were invited.

Date and time of next meeting:

Executive Board:

Tuesday 14th May

6pm-8pm

Drawing Room, Judges' Chambers, County Buildings, Stafford