

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

**Notes of the LEP Company Executive Board Meeting**

**Drawing Room, County Buildings**

**Thursday 18th July 2019**

**DRAFT Confidential Minute**

**Board Directors**

Alun Rogers (Vice Chair) risual

Wendy Dean Strategi Solutions

James Leavesley Leavesley Group

Prof Liz Barnes University of Staffordshire

Paul Farmer Wade Ceramics

Cllr Patrick Farrington Leader, Stafford Borough Council

Cllr Philip Atkins Leader, Staffordshire County Council

Mohammed Ahmed Homeserve

**Advisory/Secretariat**

Julie Frost Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP

**In Attendance**

Cllr Abi Brown Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Cllr Simon Tagg Leader, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

Tony Bray BEIS

John Henderson Chief Executive, Staffordshire County

David Sidaway Chief Executive, Stoke-on-Trent City Council

**Apologies**

David Frost Chairman, Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP

Prof Trevor McMillan Vice-Chancellor, University of Keele

Jacqui Casey Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP

Simon Ablewhite SSLEP Accountable Body

**1. Introductions**

The Vice Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

**2. Apologies**

These were noted.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were made

**4. Notes of the previous meeting and matters arising – Summary of Electronic Decisions**

The notes were agreed to be a true and fair record of the meeting with the following points raised:

* Cllr Farrington was now a Director of the Board, with Cllr Brown and Cllr Tagg to be appointed following confirmation by their Local Authorities.

**Electronic decisions from the 20 June 2019 meeting:** Over 50% of the participating quorate group agreed the decisions of Board Directors at the 20 June meeting, with most receiving unanimous accent. Decisions which were NOT endorsed were as follows:

* A temporary reduction in the quorate number (from 9 to 6 while board recruitment proceeded)
* Final sign-off of GPF application for Canalside Farm (due to one declaration of interest which prevented agreement being reached by a quorate group)

Decisions which were AGREED were as follows:

* Recruitment of private Board Directors to begin immediately
* Opportunity to confirm some District Council partner appointments ahead of geographies outcome to be explored immediately
* A three-year board commitment to addressing LEP Secretariat under resourcing.
* A paper setting out outstanding Growth Deal commitments and ‘top-slicing’ opportunity to come to July Board
* Etruria Valley – Regular progress updates (Incl. confirmation of submission of business case to DfT) to be provided to LEP Programme Officer by scheme promoter. Project to come back to Board in November for further consideration.
* Growth Deal funding allocations to Stoke Flood Alleviation (£1.2m) and Cannock & Tamworth Enterprise Centres (£0.26m)
* GPF Keele University iC7 loan on current terms and conditions, subject to default interest rate of 8% over the base rate
* GPF Blythe Park, minded to agree, subject to positive outcome on ongoing financial due diligence.

**5. Chair’s Update and Delegated Decisions**

The Vice Chair gave an update on the recent meeting he’d attended with Jake Berry MP, Tony Bray (BEIS) and Tim Pile (GBSLEP Chair). It was strongly indicated that the forthcoming change in administration would lead to a quick resolution on geography and both LEPs had been advised to continue with current collaborative agreements.

Letters of support had been sent for the following:

* Strength in Places Fund
* High Streets Heritage Action Zone
* Future High Streets Fund (Cheadle)
* Future High Streets Fund (Stafford)

A request had been made for a letter of support for the West Midlands Interchange. This would be the subject of discussion in AOB

**6. LEP Review: Future Staffing and Resources**

A paper was circulated for discussion and a presentation was giving on the current structure, including funding. It was noted that the two current full time LEP staff were on temporary contracts that were due to end on the 30th September. Future proposals required swift resolution. The next meeting of the Board would not take place until September. The LEP was running on a skeleton staff with Staffordshire County Council providing additional staff on secondment.

Tony Bray stated the LEP had dealt with the transition from being a voluntary partnership to a company in a strategic manner to meet the demands of the business. Board members now needed to give collective consideration of resources, which was common with other LEPs. He stated there was a significant amount the Board had to do to operate. He had concerns over current staff capacity and that lack of certainty could pose operational risks to the LEP.

He advised there was a need to develop a culture around the Board table to encourage open discussion and ensure the ideas to drive and deliver were coming through. This was among the ongoing issues identified at the Annual Reviews. The LIS provided the opportunity to shift and change the position of business leaders and local authorities to work together and have clear priorities. He felt use of current SSLEP funding was dominated by local authority-led projects. He added that government would be looking to LEPs to be strategic leaders and there wasn’t sufficient business engagement by SSLEP to provide adequate help. Government expected that the LEP would have stepped up to be a strong performer by the time of the next annual performance review.

Members agreed there wasn’t sufficient time to discuss strategy at board meetings. To address this, they committed to providing time to attend a half day LIS strategy meeting. It was also agreed that targeting recruitment and headhunting would be necessary to attract the quality of Board members required.

**Action: Strategy Meeting to be organised (*date of 22 August 2019 now set)***

Stoke-on-Trent City Council representatives noted effective engagement with officers from the Make It team could improve business attendance and engagement on strategy development.

**Action: Abi Brown and Alun Rogers to liaise on potential future engagement with Make It team.**

Members were asked to agree which of the 3 options for staffing and resources they wished to approve and voted for option 3, which proposed a combination of cash and staff secondments. The partner County and City Councils and Universities of Staffordshire and Keele (Liz Barnes having consulted with Trevor McMillan who was not present) noted that they were unwilling to provide funding at this time. The universities declared a preference in providing skilled staff on a per engagement temporary secondment basis to support execution of the LEP’s strategy.

Opportunities to access additional cash match was discussed and top-slicing was again supported as an appropriate model. The paper had included details of the arrangement previously agreed by the Board on Growth Deal 3 ‘top-slicing.’ The board was willing to see amendment made to this which would increase the available funding. Tony Bray offered support in looking at this funding mechanism and whether current arrangements might be amended.

**Decision: That the Board agreed the proposed structure for the revised secretariat set out in Item 6**

**Decision: That the Board agreed Option 3 was the preferred model but were not currently proposing to provide cash match towards the costs of the revised team.**

**Action: Alun Rogers & Jacqui Casey to move forward on future staffing arrangements, to agree secondment arrangements with partners that will meet the skills set required to improve the core team in line with the LEP Review and Annual Performance Review improvements and to formal arrangements for seconded individuals.**

**Action: Alun Rogers, Simon Ablewhite & Jacqui Casey to examine flexibility and constraints of top slicing with Tony Bray.**

**7. LEP Board Vacancies & Board Member Induction**

A paper was circulated for comment. Trevor McMillan had noted prior to the meeting that skills and experience in things like entrepreneurship, innovation, change management, leadership etc are all critical to the board and may come from outside the sectors listed. This was accepted, while recognising the need to build a Board to direct LIS delivery, which could come from among the representation highlighted in the paper. The opportunity to represent both Universities was accepted. It was agreed that all members would take a proactive approach to engage prospective members, targeting strong and diverse candidates. The Make It team would also be engaged in identifying suitable individuals.

**Decision: That University of Keele be invited to join the Board and the advertisement for four new private sector Board Directors include detail of the skills set being sought.**

**Action: All/Jacqui Casey to carry out a Skills Audit to identify gaps**

**8. Full Risk Register**

Item removed to facilitate discussion. To be considered at next meeting.

**9. Local Industrial Strategy Update**

A paper was circulated for information. Some of the recent Business Engagement Workshops had not been well attended. The LIS would form part of the agenda for the Strategy Meeting members had committed to attending in mid-August. It was agreed that the LEP must have a prepared, short and punchy, Place-based, tactical list outlining what was required once the new government administration was in place.

**Action: ALL to have an input in the list for the new government**

**10. Finance Update**

**i. LEP Quarter 1 Finance Position 2019/20**

A report was circulated for information including details of the new proposed financial dashboard layout. Thanks were extended to Mark Connell from Stoke-on-Trent City Council for his input in developing the new dashboard.

**ii. Proposed Scheme of Delegation**

The new draft Scheme of Delegation had been amended in line with comments received from board Directors following the 20 June 2019 meeting, relating to financial limits on GPF delegations. Alun Rogers requested a further amendment under ‘Approval of Expenditure within approved annual revenue budget (excluding Project Development Activity)’ to remove reference to delegation to secretariat staff below Strategy & Governance Manager level as sufficient delegation had been placed with the LEP managerial staff. This was accepted by the Board. It was noted that agreement to the Scheme of Delegation enabled the required sign off GPF allocation to the previously agreed Canalside Farm project.

**Decision: That the Scheme of Delegation be approved subject to the removal of the delegation to LEP secretariat under ‘Approval of Expenditure within approved annual revenue budget (excluding Project Development Activity).’**

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 in place. A final report was also expected shortly from a randomly-selected ‘deep dive’ by the CLGU compliance team.

**Action: The board noted the content of the report and agreed to receive the Final Deep Dive Audit Report and combined Improvement Plan at subsequent meetings in order to assessed progress being made.**

**Decision: It was agreed to plan a special half-day event for the board in 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. (*Date of 22 August now agreed*)**

**11 Skills Advisory Panel: Terms of Reference & Programme of Work**

**Decision: Members approved the following recommendations:**

* **to note the position against the Skills Advisory Panel Project Plan**
* **for the Education Skills & Employment Group (ESEG) to be dissolved and replaced by the SAP Board**
* **the SAP Terms of Reference**

It was noted that the next steps to address identified SAP evidence gaps and further analysis requirements must align with the LIS work to achieve effective coordination on both resources and outcomes for the LIS.

**13. Any Other Business**

A request had been received for a letter of support backing the West Midlands Interchange. Members felt this was a national decision and agreed that it was not appropriate for the LEP to respond to the request.

**Date and time of next meeting:**

**Executive Board:** Thursday 19th September

6pm-8pm

**Strategi Solutions, Hooters Hall Road, Lymedale West,**

**Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 9QF**