**STOKE ON TRENT & STAFFORDSHIRE**

**LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP**

**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING**

**27 February 2020**

**LEP Review: SSLEP Improvement Plan Update & the Annual Performance Review 2019/20**

**1. Background**

1.1 Every Local Enterprise Partnership undertakes an Annual Performance Review (APR) with the Dept for Business, Energy, Innovation & Skills (BEIS). This is an opportunity to look back on the previous 12 months’ partnership work and operations, reflecting on what went well and opportunities to improve performance. An assessment is made on LEP performance across three areas: Delivery, Governance and Strategy. An Action Plan and delivery timetable for improvements is then developed with BEIS for the coming year. Progress in completing the actions in this year’s Improvement Plan is reported at every Board meeting.

1.2 For the past two years, SSLEP has received the same scores, with Delivery scoring *Good* and Governance & Strategy scoring *In Need of Improvement*. It was noted that scoring became more stringent for the 2018/19 assessment, in the light of the LEP Review and government push to ensure that Partnerships are sufficiently equipped to meet the future requirements of LEPs in driving growth in productivity across their local economy.

**2. SSLEP Improvement Plan**

2.1 The latest update of the current SSLEP Improvement Plan is attached as Appendix 1 of this report. It incorporates outcomes actions from the 2018/19 APR and several external audits commissioned by the Accountable Body and a March 2019 CLGU governance Deep Dive. Of the 25 areas for actions in the Plan, SSLEP has fully completed 18, with only minor actions still to be completed within the remaining 7. None of the outstanding actions relate to compliance issues. Outstanding actions (highlighted in yellow in document) are as follows:

Action 1: Operational sub groups ToR reviews & LIS sub groups agreed

Action 3: SSLEP Communications Plan in place

Action 5: New Board Member Induction undertaken

Action 12: LEP Secretariat email addresses in place

Action 13: Recruitment of CEO post completed

Action 23: Revised Audit & Finance and Strategic Programme Management Group arrangements in place

Action 25: Etruria Valley project outcome determined by Board

**3. SSLEP Annual Performance Review 2019/20**

3.1 The Government issued new guidance for the 2019/20 APR process. The Mid Year Review, held in September 2019, acknowledged the significant progress made during 2019/20 in addressing required improvements in: SSLEP governance arrangements; the more strategic focus of Board meetings; and the working arrangements of the secretariat. In January 2020, an indicative pre-APR score for 2019/20, based upon a CLGU desk top exercise, was issued to each partnership ahead of their APR sessions. SSLEP’s indicative scores were: Strategy - *Requirements Met* and Governance & Delivery - *Requires Improvement*. Under the new system, the subsequent APR meeting provides opportunity to fully explore the detail of the SSLEP LEP Review work and operational activity during the year and could raise these indicative scores. The ability to provide a further update on key areas by 1 March 2020, allows LEPs to make sure that their activity over the entire year can be considered in determining the final APR score for 2019/20.

3.2 The SSLEP APR for the 2019/20 period was held on 3 February 2020, with the LEP Interim Partnership Manager, SSLEP S151 Officer (Accountable Body), the LEP Chair and Vice Chair in attendance. Appendix 2 of this report provides the BEIS note from that meeting. Over the next few weeks, the APR meeting scores of all LEPs will be considered at a CLGU moderation session, to ensure all LEPs are being marked fairly. Final APR scores for 22019/20 will be sent to the Interim Partnership Manager in April.

**R*ecommendation: That Board Members note the detail provided in the report and take opportunity to raise any queries.***

**Lead Board Director:** Alun Rogers, Chair of Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP

**Lead Officer & Report Author:** Jacqui Casey, Interim Partnership Manager