

**LEP Company Executive Board Meeting  
Giosprite, Stowe Street, Lichfield, WS13 6AW  
Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2019  
Minutes**

**Board Directors**

Alun Rogers (Acting Chair)	risual
Mohammed Ahmed	Homeserve
Hannah Ault	Valentine Clays
Sinead Butters	Aspire Housing Ltd
Cllr Abi Brown	Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Prof Martin Jones	Deputy Vice-Chancellor Staffordshire University
James Leavesley	Leavesley Group
Prof Trevor McMillan	Vice-Chancellor, University of Keele
Sara Williams	Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce

**Advisory/Secretariat**

Simon Ablewhite	SSLEP Accountable Body
Jacqui Casey	Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP
Kevin Fenning	Metrodynamics

**In Attendance**

Phil Cresswell	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Mark Parkinson	Staffordshire County Council
Andrea Whitworth	BEIS

**Apologies**

Cllr George Allen	Deputy Leader Regen & Planning, East Staffordshire Borough Council
Cllr Philip Atkins	Leader, Staffordshire County Council
Prof Liz Barnes	Vice-Chancellor, University of Staffordshire
Caroline Brown	Caja Group
Wendy Dean	Strategi Solutions
Paul Farmer	Wade Ceramics
Cllr Patrick Farrington	Leader, Stafford Borough Council
Martin Hamilton	Chief Executive, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
John Henderson	Chief Executive, Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Jeremy Oates	Portfolio Holder Heritage & Growth, Tamworth Borough Council
Cllr Simon Tagg	Leader, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council

## 1. Introductions

The Acting Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. For the benefit of the new Board Members, introductions were made. AR noted that the meeting was not quorate and any decisions of the meeting would be followed up by an electronic vote in accordance with SSLEP Assurance Framework procedure.

## 2. Apologies

These were noted.

## 3. Declarations of Interest

CLlr Abi Brown noted an interest in Item 10i; the Stoke Station Electricity Update.

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

The notes of the 21 November 2019 meeting were noted to be a fair and accurate record of the meeting. AR provided the following update under *Matters Arising*:

- **Etruria Valley Project:** AR advised the Board that he had decided to defer any report from Balfour Beatty until the Board had received a response from DfT regarding due diligence on the match Dept. for Transport funding. It was noted that SoTCC had provided the requested Cashflow and Key Risks information which will also come to the next Board when outcome of DfT work is known
- **City East Link Road:** AR noted that SoTCC officers were working with the City's consultants to put details together that might be considered by the LEP's Independent Technical Evaluator (Hatch Regeneris) and the LEP Secretariat in developing terms & conditions of a draft agreement. Milestone details had been provided by the SoTCC consultants since last meeting. The Board would be kept updated on progress.

Electronic decisions from the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2019 meeting were confirmed as follows:

- **Item 6: Endorsement of New LEP Directors**  
To appoint Caroline Brown (Caja Ltd) and Hannah Ault (Valentine Clays) as Board Directors subject to satisfactory disc profile results.
- **Item 9.ii: Update on High Risk LGF Scheme - City East Link Road Growth Deal scheme**  
To approve the request for funding subject to inclusion of appropriate conditions in the grant agreement.
- **Item 9.iii: Cannock Chase & Silverdale Enterprise Centre**  
To approve an increase in funding of £116,000, which would allow improvements to both Centres to proceed to timetable and enable opportunity to target businesses providing higher skilled jobs.
- **Item 9.iv: Growing Places Fund Update: Blythe Park**  
To approve the request from the Growing Places Fund Officer to award a £1.4m loan subject to recommended terms and conditions set out in the report.
- **Item 10: Stoke-on-Trent Transforming Cities Fund Bid**  
To approve the request for the Chairman to provide a letter of support for the funding bid.

- **Item 12: LEP Review Delivery Update - Annual Performance Review Improvement Plan Update**

To approve James Leavesley as chair of Chair's Recruitment Panel.

## 5. **Chair's Update and Delegated Decisions**

AR had responded to the joint letter received from Jake Berry (Minister for the Northern Powerhouse & Local Growth) and Nadhim Zahawi (Minister for Business & Industry) relating to geographic boundaries. SSLEP had followed the advice of Stephen Jones (Director, Cities and Local Growth Unit) in restating why SSLEP believes the county geography provides the right geography, backed by accurate economic data it had previously provided, noting the work undertaken to resolve the issue locally and outlining the substantial progress made by the partnership through the LEP Review and noting the impact of not having received the £300k Review Implementation Grant.

While the SSLEP position remained as originally set out in 2018, backed by accurate data, the GBSLEP position had now changed. GBSLEP had now moved to the position of accepting the government request to remove overlaps and had stated a new position in proposing to take the 4 District/Borough authorities of Lichfield, Cannock Chase, Tamworth and East Staffordshire solely into their partnership.

AR noted the Autumn LEP Network meeting and WM LEP Chairs meeting on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> December 2019 respectively and further strategic company meetings which he had undertaken in the previous weeks.

## 6. **LEP Local Industrial Strategy**

Kevin Fenning of Metro Dynamics took Board Members through a presentation on the third draft of the Local Industrial Strategy which incorporated all Board Member and partner comments received and was presented as the draft for public consultation. Proposed Timelines:

- Out to Consultation until 10 February
- Analysis of feedback & further revisions through February
- In a Position to Publish by end of March, subject to new Government policy messages
- Implementation planning commencing now, draft by 29 April Board
- Launch Suite of Documents June AGM date tbc

Partner support was requested in disseminating draft and encouraging business input. Pitch deck would be developed for use in building understanding. Early engagement with new MPs was important. Key areas noted included: the need to draw out Stoke & Staffordshire USPs/'tippex test" and distinctiveness of local places; providing clarity on what government can do for this area and the area can achieve for government.

**Decision: Subject to KF tackling points raised for further clarity, the draft should be issued for public consultation early in the New Year.**

**Action: Details of consultation to be circulated and disseminated through Board Member networks.**

## 7. **LEP Chair's Recruitment Update**

JL advised the Board that the application deadline for the Chair's position had been extended to 3 January 2020 in order to ensure that the appointment would be advertised on the government's public appointments website, as set out in the National Assurance Framework. Applications

could not be uploaded to this site during purdah and the opportunity for additional exposure of the opportunity must not be lost.

JL confirmed that the number and quality of applications received in respect of the appointment was already such that he could confirm that interviews would be able to go ahead on 10 January 2020. He requested that a third private sector Board Member volunteer to support the Interview Panel, joining two private and two public sector Directors who had already volunteered. Any Panel recommendation would be ratified by the LEP Executive Board.

**Action: SB volunteered to support the Nominations Panel.**

## **8. Review of LEP Sub Groups**

At the November 2019 meeting, Board Members had run through the Operational Sub Groups and, following a review of the Terms of Reference set out in the Assurance Framework, had subsequently expressed interest to the Acting Chair in supporting the work of specific groups. Expressions of interest had been considered by the Acting Chair who now circulated a revised diagram, setting out SSLEP Operational Sub Groups which included a named private sector Chair and Vice Chair. AR noted that the doubling up of Board Director support for specific group was designed to build Board resilience and knowledge going forward.

**Decision: Board Directors agreed the Chair and Vice Chair allocations for the Operational Sub Groups.**

AR noted that governance work was now being concluded following the revision to the Articles of Association.

## **9. Full Risk Register**

MA took Board Directors through the detailed risks register. A new risk had been added to CDGD, as per Board request, on the funding available for the ITA contract. JL noted that Risk CGDG 13 (economic impact of Brexit) might be read as an opportunity as well as a risk. Discussion took place on current DiT programme of overseas visits and how LEP might get more involved in promoting opportunities to business and monitoring impacts. SW offered to disseminate details.

It was considered that future policy presented a significant risk in the LEP's ability to move forwards. The 'Rising Tide' paper was being quoted by Ministers and potentially shaping thoughts on how things might be done in future, including collapsing LEPs into Combined Authorities where they exist. This lack of ability to move or to self-determination presented a unique risk for the company. SB felt the risks were not sufficiently comprehensive and required a hands-on Board approach that warranted a brief separate session.

**Decision: Board Directors agreed the current risks & mitigations, added a new risk in relation to new government economic policy approaches and determined to hold a separate session to examine risk in detail.**

**Action: SW's office to provide DiT overseas visits details for dissemination.**

## **10. City Deal and Growth Deal Programme: Stoke Station Electricity Upgrade**

AR noted that this is an incredibly important scheme for the LEP as the station presents the gateway to our only City. Several Board Members noted the need to continue to support a

scheme that is proposing improvements to the point of arrival which provides the first impression that businesses receive. The potential Transforming Cities Fund programme, which would involve the City Council, University of Staffordshire, Network Rail and various businesses, could build from this scheme.

**Decision: Board Members continued to support the scheme through the allocation of £100k Local Growth Funds based upon the jobs and commercial floorspace outputs.**

#### **11. EU Paper Update**

AR noted that, as PF was not able to attend, detailed queries might be difficult to respond to in the room but would be followed up as required. While the report content was helpful, it didn't provide any insight as to whether the projects were considered as 'good'/making a step change for strategic priorities to which they were designed to respond e.g. Table 3 doesn't indicate whether we are catching up to where we expected to be at this point or on a strong trajectory. SB raised the consequences of under-performance on the flood mitigation scheme? These were felt to be limited in relation to the new funding arrangements.

It was noted that the LEP is one member among around 20 on the ESIF Committee. PF chairs the meeting. SW was noted to sit on the Committee. The Committee can comment upon the strategic fit of proposed projects/programmes against LEP priorities set out in the Stoke and Staffordshire ESIF Strategy. The managing authorities (govt departments) make the decisions on which applications are funded. AW advised that discussions had taken place on opportunities for better alignment with emerging LIS priorities through any future funding opportunities in the programme.

#### **12i. LEP Review Delivery Update: Annual Performance Review Improvement Plan Update**

Since the previous Board meeting, the vacant Board seats had been filled and updates made to project positions on the LEP website. It was noted that, of the 25 actions included in the Improvement Plan (these identified by the Board, through independent audit and through the Annual Performance Review), all bar 7 had been completed. Of those seven, all are well underway with only some outstanding issues under them. Outstanding points had not yet been finalised due to team capacity. ALL would be completed by end of March 2020. The points were as follow:-

- New Chairman in place (interviews organised for 10<sup>th</sup> January 2020)
- All sub-groups operating with a private sector chair in place, working to LEP governance, with a revised Terms of Reference included in the Assurance Framework
- Equalities and Diversity Champion identified (agreed under item 8)
- External signage at LEP Office (*installation date of 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020 provided by installation company*)
- Secretariat staff on LEP emails (recent attempt to transfer caused interference with Growth Hub telephone line; problem currently under review by SCC IT Team)
- New PR & Comms Support agreed (currently being pursued by Partnership Manager, with support having been offered by Hannah Ault)
- SSLEP Website Review (programmed for Jan – March 2020 time slot, linked to PR support)
- Recruitment of additional staff (two further staff in place by 6 January 2020)
- CEO's job description to be agreed with new Chairman (to be pursued when Chair is identified in January 2020)
- Due diligence to be completed on Etruria Valley (City Council submitted Business Case submitted on 19 November 2019; under consideration by Dept. for Transport with anticipated response in January 2020)

SA advised the Board that this was a positive report and that none of the outstanding issues related to compliance. A summary position was requested as part of the pack in future. The board noted the report content.

**Action: JC to provide summary position as part of the pack.**

### **12ii.LEP Company Status**

SA updated Board Directors on a number of areas relating to the company:

- The passing of the written resolution, updating of the Articles of Association and clarifying the position on the quorum;
- The lack of national guidance in relation to the VAT issues raised. AR noted that there were a variety of positions across LEPs and the promise of further work by the LEP Network which had not previously been able to provide clarity through its discussions with government. SA intended to bring a paper for Board decision as soon as research was complete;
- SA's discussions with accountants on behalf of the LEP. Again, government guidance on requirements was limited in relation to level of detail and LEPs were adopting a wide variety of positions on this; and
- Reminding the Board that the accountable body was currently providing the company secretary role but that it was the intention that LEP secretariat would take this forward once senior appointments were in place.

### **13. Any Other Business**

AR provided a briefing note from Staffordshire Police, noted discussions on the Staffordshire Crime figures and updated on the opportunity for the LEP to work more closely with the police to achieve business crime reduction. Risual was getting involved in this work.

Newcastle under Lyme borough Council had written to request the support of a private sector board director on their Town Deal Boards for Kidsgrove and Newcastle. Anticipated commitment was for 1 meeting (1 day)/month while the programme bid was being developed. Details to be circulated and volunteers were requested. JL noted the importance of alignment between this work and the LIS strategy to ensure that across all geographies, partners were in tune with priorities and can maximise opportunities for investment and growth.

**Action: JC to circulate details.**

AR noted that a significant amount of work had been undertaken in the past 6 months to progress strategy development. Some half day sessions were needed outside of Board meeting to cover areas including induction and skills priorities & the SAP work. These would be arranged early in the new year.

A request was made to discuss Board meeting timings. This would be revisited when the new chair was in place.

AB reminded the Board that the new Stoke City Council Vision and New Programme would be announced on 6<sup>th</sup> January with a 45 day consultation. Board Director involvement was encouraged and it was hope that work flowing from this could link with the LEP agenda.

The meeting closed 8.00pm.

**Date and time of next meeting:**

**Executive Board:** Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020

6pm-8pm Venue Michelin Tyres plc, Stoke on Trent