****

**SSLEP Skills Advisory Panel (SAP)**

**Purpose**

1. To inform the SSLEP Executive Group of the 2020/21 £75k Department for Education, Skills Advisory Panel grant funding and conditions.
2. To provide a set of options, for further consideration, on how the grant may be spent and recommendations for immediate spend on 2 projects.

**Recommendation**

1. The recommendation is for the SSLEP Executive Board to:
2. approve £20k grant spend on the 2 projects below

* £5k match contribution to purchase an annual subscription of EMSI analyst tool software for 2020/21
* £15k match contribution to fund the Economy & Skills Analyst post for 2020/21

1. consider the options for future grant spend.

**Background**

1. The Department for Education (DfE) is committed to the development of the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP’s SAP analytical capability and also its ability to gain influence so that it can perform its leadership role to implement changes in local skills provision to better meet the needs of employers.
2. The DfE will support the SAP to achieve this role through a £75k grant in 2020/21 to achieve 2 broad objectives:

* Publish a Local Skills Report by March 2021
* Further develop the analytical capability of the SAP in a sustainable way, which includes developing local action plans.

1. The details of when the grant will be issued has not yet been provided by the SAP Programme Team.

**EMSI Analyst tool software**

1. There is increasing interest and demand for better labour market information (LMI) in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, especially since the creation of the SSLEP Skills Advisory Panel. It is recognised that good LMI is vital to making informed decisions regarding the development and growth of the local economy and the effective commissioning of successful employment and skills programmes. Given the limitations of publicly available data/information and to further improve our understanding of employment and skills needs in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent the recommendation is to procure an economic modelling tool produced by EMSI.
2. The Emsi tool provides the most detailed and localised labour market intelligence available in the UK, which in turn creates a robust base upon which to create uniquely localised and detailed employment projections. Emsi brings together different data sources to create a robust composite dataset that provides detailed labour market intelligence on hundreds of industries and occupations at the lowest geographic levels. By joining together these datasets, Emsi can provide unique insights into the relationship between industry trends and associated occupational requirements.
3. The EMSI analyst tool software at £15k, will offer 10 individual licenses and provides good value as it includes a £5k discount. If the product is contracted before the end of April 20, a COVID-19 dashboard will be made available at no cost with a commercial value of £2k. This particular dashboard will provide valuable data to inform economic and skills recovery strategies for the LEP and partners. The licenses will be distributed to colleagues at the LEP, the County Council, the City Council across the skills, insight and inward investment teams. Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council to provide the £10k match.

**Economy & Skills Analyst post**

1. Darren Farmer was appointed to the Economy & Skills Analyst permanent post in July 2019. The post was part funded £15k from the former 2019/20 £75k SAP grant and the balance of the salary costs met by the Council and the City. Darren’s main duties included the development of the SAP evidence base, consultation with key partners, the development of the SAP skills strategy and general skills analyst support to the LEP, and the Council and City’s skills and economic development teams.

**The options for future grant spend**

**Employer engagement projects.**

1. The skills survey, previously commissioned by the LEP from the 2020/21 SAP grant, consulted 1,500 employers, across a range of sectors, business sizes and LEP geography. 640 employers expressed an interest to learn more about the survey once completed.
2. This provides an opportunity for the LEP to engage with a broad business base and an option to progress this is to deliver a skills summit in the autumn.
3. The skills summit could be targeted predominantly at employers and additionally education institutions, the Careers Enterprise Company, National Careers Service, LEP, Council and City officers.
4. The summit could focus upon skills priorities and local solutions, the main feature being a presentation from Watermelon, the consultants commissioned to undertake the survey. The presentation would be followed by a number of workshops, possibly sector based, to discuss the issues and themes arising from the survey and agree set of actions.

**Further Employer Survey to gauge impact of CONVID-19 on skills priorities**

1. To commission an employer survey framed around skills issues following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on local employers. The specification to be drawn up and shared for comment before publishing.

Contact Officers: Anthony Baines – Assistant Director for Skills & Employability, Staffordshire County Council [Anthony.baines@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Anthony.baines@staffordshire.gov.uk); and Julie Obada - Strategic Manager – Employment, Learning & Skills, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, [Julie.obada@stoke.gov.uk](mailto:Julie.obada@stoke.gov.uk)