

**LEP Company Executive Board Meeting  
via MS Teams conference call  
Thursday 16 July 2020  
Final Minutes**

**Board Directors**

Alun Rogers (Chair)	risual
Mohammed Ahmed	Homeserve
Hannah Ault	Valentine Clays
Caroline Brown	Caja Group
Sinead Butters	Aspire Housing Ltd
James Leavesley (Vice Chair)	Leavesley Group
Prof Trevor McMillan	Vice-Chancellor, University of Keele
Cllr Abi Brown	Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Cllr Patrick Farrington	Leader, Stafford Borough Council
Cllr Philip Atkins	Leader, Stafford County Council
Cllr George Allen	Deputy Leader Regen & Planning, East Staffordshire Borough Council
Prof Martin Jones	Alternate for Prof Liz Barnes University of Staffordshire

**Advisory/Secretariat**

Simon Ablewhite	SSLEP Accountable Body
Mark Parkinson	SSLEP Chief Executive
Jo Kemp	SSLEP Secretariat/Business Engagement Officer
Sam Hicks	SSLEP Strategy & Research/LIS Lead Officer

**In Attendance**

Andrea Whitworth	Assistant Director, Cities & Local Growth Unit
Phil Creswell	Director of Place Growth and Prosperity
Tim Clegg	CEO Stafford Borough Council
Cllr Sybil Ralphs	(Alternate) Leader, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Vernon Linden	Senior Officer, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Simon McEneny	Director, Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council

**Apologies**

Paul Farmer	Wade Ceramics
Sara Williams	Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce
Prof Liz Barnes	Vice-Chancellor, University of Staffordshire
Cllr Simon Tagg	Leader, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Cllr Jeremy Oates	Portfolio Holder Heritage & Growth, Tamworth Borough Council
Cllr Doug Pullen	Leader, Lichfield District Council

## 1. Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. AR noted that the meeting was quorate.

## 2. Apologies

These were noted.

## 3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were raised.

## 4. Notes of the previous meeting and matters arising

Minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

## 5. Chair's Update and Delegated Decisions

Emma Catterall to whom the LEP Board had offered a place will be changing employment.

AR & JL informed the Board that they held a discussion with her and she intends to stay in the area and would still like to join the Board. Several Board members expressed an affirmative preference. None present suggested a negative.

AW will take the query away to check with BEIS. If EC's situation is a transition period, it should be ok, but review if longer term between roles.

Board's approval otherwise given.

### A busy week otherwise with;

- Metrodynamics re: LIS Implementation Plan
- Covid TaskForce
- SPMG - busy sessions re: policy briefings and Getting Building Fund
- WM LEP Chair meeting
- Digital & 5G
- British Business Bank
- Historic England

## 6. Local Industrial Strategy Implementation Plan, pandemic Recovery and post-Brexit International Trade

Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> July in which work on LIS Implementation Plan was done with Metrodynamics, LEP Chair, LIS Sub-Group Chairs, secretariat & LA presence. Government advising to incorporate a pandemic recovery plan aspect. Fiscal event expected this Autumn. It was proposed by the LEP Chairman that a Draft version will be progressed over the Summer and brought back to the Board in September with an ambition to get a version finalised for Autumn. The Plan presently means *what* we need to do. Later Plan will mean *how* we will do it, with priorities aligning to Sub-Group results.

Cllr AB & AR have worked around Localities too across area Geography. This current draft will be worked on over the summer but won't be published until all stakeholders have input/are satisfied. It's a scene setter for now for the area, so we have an idea of what we want to be lobbying for, etc. Document has headline themes & approaches at this stage.

Cllr AB encouraged other LAs to attend if they haven't done so yet & requested that versions are marked to ensure members are looking at the most recent document, as there have been many.

AR confirmed a version control table can be added, so stakeholder can overlook previous versions & go straight to latest.

AW commented that from a BEIS perspective it looks good & is on the right lines. Next version should also be in draft to be able to respond to the recovery and devolution white paper expected to be published in the autumn

AR - LGA Conference – recovery & devolution plan expected in Autumn but we're moving in right direction.

SB – 'Place' refers only to town, city, & rural areas which is a rather binary description. There are lots of peripheral estates to mention, regeneration, green agenda & retro-fitting. Language of report thus far is focused on new build in town, city or designated rural area, but we need more open descriptions.

At Feb 2019 Board, approval for this year's budget of £100k for this development work was given. The LEP Chief Executive will establish a costed specification of work through a framework contract to provide specialist technical support to complete the process up to end of this year.

The Board agreed to the recommendation.

#### Report of LIS Implementation from Sub-Groups

Sub-Groups are working at a frenetic pace.

Updates:

HA – Growing Business - Looking at Implementation stage. Strategic growth programme has been put forward & is in addition to what Growth Hub are doing - GrowthMapper. Pilot rollout for our LEP. Research element with 'Make It' to look at identified needs re: space.

AB - Place One meeting. Good choice of partners. Underpinning of Localities group will help develop further. 2nd meeting next week (w/c 20/07).

AR - Localities - Good conversations with local Leaders. Moving from reactive to directive re: what we want for 'Place' if funds arrive.

Midlands Engine Strategy Refresh - Cllr PA - ongoing - letter to Sir John Peace re: Project Alchemy – hybrid urban development Co. brings together items & developments for Councils to manage. D2N2 involved. It has its merits & we need to consider it. Midlands Connect - money into transport & travel recently. A new paper is coming together. Midlands Engine meeting 22nd July, Robert Jenrick is joining this.

MJ – asked about activity around Constellation Partnership re: N. Staffs/S. Cheshire Manufacturing Corridor.

Cllr PA - Meeting due August. Delayed by Covid. Midland Connect are paying for the study. Including areas around Stoke & also considering A50/M1 Junction at that end of our region.

## **7. Policy: UK Government Consultation: UK Research and Development Roadmap**

MJ – advised the group that a 58-page document had been created on R&D expenditure for the research field. Higher Education not referred to like Further Education is though. It informs on Government policy. However, it ties in with LIS in terms of topics & dynamics. A R&D Strategy Advisory Group is to be set up to harness local strengths. Talent retention emphasis too.

'Moonshoot' is term used, for change – need to simplify things, but 2 more Government Depts are proposed; ARPA (Advanced Research Projects Agency) & Office for Talent.

Staffordshire & Keele Universities are going to consider together what 'knowledge exchange' will involve. Devolved knowledge exchange might occur. How do we maximize public investment from R&D? Consultation window to 12th Aug. 19% cash uplift suggested, but how will our 'places' benefit?

Open call for online responses by August.

Autumn statement & devolution recovery white paper are things to watch.

AR was at a West Midlands Colleges, Westminster event with Gavin Williamson a few months back who signalled that colleges were being looked at regarding grants for Further Education.

JL - Do companies need to respond re: their R&D are they getting a slice of the money?

MJ – No, report refers only to adjustments to existing Govt interventions only. LEP can give their feedback by 12/08 to flag this.

MP - LEP can provide a response in support of Universities.

AW - Local leadership around innovation is important. BEIS remains committed to Universities here, as a conduit to support local businesses. LEP role of keeping R&D on their levelling-up agenda could be included in the response.

AR/SH - this can go on next week's Innovation sub-group to get input & provide a strong response by 12/08.

## **8. Office for Police and Crime Commissioner - Business crime strategy**

AR met with the Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner, Sue Arnold, 9 months ago. They have since done work with Staffordshire University around 'business crime'. Findings should be shared within the next 3 weeks to our LEP. Business Crime Strategy needed - any views are welcome if Members will consider committing resources.

JL - happy to help, having been a business crime victim/CB - happy to be involved too.

## **9. Strategic Relationships**

AR advised that he & MP had held a meeting with Eilis Scott of Historic England on 13<sup>th</sup> July, after she had recently approached the LEP. This was useful to think about how we can work more closely together particularly with regards 'place' and sector skills and youth employment/training.

CLlr AB – Stoke-On-Trent County Council have excellent relationship with Historic England - balancing growth & development, with heritage. They are happy to support with ambitious areas like ours.

AR – The issue of development of old school buildings was pushed hard, as it could also provide employment in the area. We will continue with this relationship over the whole county. There are 250 listed buildings in Lichfield Town Centre & plenty more over the LEP area, albeit priorities are Stoke for them at present. Would Eilis Scott be a good member for the 'Place' Sub-Group?

CLlr AB to consider.

## **10. Report of Strategic Programme Management Group**

SB - SPMG met 13/07; Hatch Regeneris gave a presentation responding to MCLHG call for projects last month, re: our £23.7m allocation from projects put forward. SPMG issued a copy of the presentation to all LA partners and private sector Exec Board members that set out the advice to date around the submission and contingency project lists.

Communications protocol to be drafted by MCLHG, therefore embargo until we hear back from Government about approval & comms protocol is in place.

Our LEP moved quickly & transparently on the projects. Healthy experience in terms of understanding the importance of submitting good bids. Thanks to all for their involvement.

AW - reiterates her thanks to all for the progress in such a short timescale. Next step is to share with Ministers by c.o.p. Fri 17<sup>th</sup> July. Public announcements will follow.

MP - feedback can be given regarding non-shortlisted bids following the submission process.

## **11. Report of the Growth Hub Steering Group**

HA spoke about the Growth Hub, to provide private Board members an overview. The Steering Group has only had 1 meeting since Jan though, due to Covid crisis.

Growth Hub has been in operation for 5 years; 38 across the country - 1 per LEP.

7000 active businesses contacts via Helpline at present.

2000 current business diagnostic running with advisors.

1000 calls p/wk during Covid.

10,000 businesses have been referred on to area of help.

Lots of current webinars being run. Quick & positive response to current issues.

Good at public & private sector relationships.

NK - concentrate on SME & LEP priority areas, but there for all S-O-T & Staffs businesses.

HA - funding agreed annually;

- BEIS core
- ERDF
- BEIS - additional grant 2020 - 21 (down to Covid emergency only).

Spending criteria is set by contributing partners. Talked through slide re: expenditure  
2 additional employees funded recently.

NK – recent additional funding has been very useful - historically some have received more funds than others. This has enabled our Growth Hub to be a lot more reactive.

A recent project was re: safe shopping in Staffordshire (videos)

HA - link with NK/Growth Hub & Board is strong & useful.

NK responded to questions re; investment & funding in answer to a question from PC.

AR - weekly meetings now to bring Growth Hub & LEP/LIS closer.

HA - please engage with Advocacy Brief, some Members are, but we need more support please retweet etc. Although statistics show that our revised Marcomms are doing well on Twitter & LinkedIn.

## **12. Report of the Audit & Finance Committee - Audited Accounts 19/20 & Q1 Finance Dashboard**

MA – Audited Accounts need a decision from the Board re: financial statements.

The Board approved the accounts.

**13. Report of the Audit & Finance Committee - LEP Risk Register**

MA – Finance Dashboard. Q1 tends to be green, but surprising with Covid impact. Programmes are on track.

1 Amber = Local Growth Deal re; both Blythe Park & Stoke Power Upgrade - awaiting feedback, but not concerned yet.

Growing Places Fund – interest free loan supplied. Issued majority of funds. £2.9m left – considering Digital, but don't want to go up against Growth Hub who can supply grants. Will propose other areas for consideration next meeting.

AR - All risks & issues are in a single list done by Sharon in Secretariat, on a single spreadsheet. We are working on digitized live dashboard system by September

SA – There has been positive Growth Deal spend compared to previous years - keep it up please for remaining quarters partners.

**14. SSLEP CEO Recruitment**

AR - MP is acting Interim CEO until December 2020. Need to recruitment process now, paper issued to Board gives background & proposes recruitment committee.

- Approach
- Proposed names
- Start July/Aug to appoint a.s.a.p. Some LEPs used recruitment agency - propose we use local advert 1st before looking to recruitment agency. Any comments?

AB – Happy to support, but we should consider recruitment consultants too.

HA - Suggests digital campaign too. LinkedIn ideal. Consider low level paid digital advertising. Advocacy Briefing too.

TMc – there are free organisations to use which can reach gender & ethnic diversity – AR to follow up with TMc after meeting.

AR – **District & Borough nominations needed** please – to be agreed amongst the eight LAs.

Current list

CB – Chair Audit & Finance Committee

SB – Vice SPMG

JL – Chair SPMG/ Vice LEP

AR - Chair

SW - Equality & diversity Champion

AB - for Stoke on Trent City Council

CIr PA - for Staffordshire County Council as the Accountable Body

CEO and/or the S151 Officer

**15. AGM & Conference – Autumn 2020**

AR - Statutorily AGM needed. Online for mandatory necessities. Proposed for September

MP – the LEP Secretariat has established a task-finish group with the Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce team to provide technical advice

AR requested minuted thanks to SW & her team for this.

Conference - still hope to have this in late Autumn. Numbers for gathering etc. still obviously up in the air. Talk about this in September. LEP moved on, so we want to show our progress & vision.

**16. Annual Performance Review**

AW - carried out on all LEPs in 2 parts; y/e review Dec/Jan & a mid-year Aug/Sept, but likely to be Sept this year. Similar process - light touch.

Looks at website; Conflict of Interest, Board members, papers posted timely etc.

Delivery Strategy - LIS Implementation Plan & Covid.

Conversation around Government whitepaper if out by then.

Delivery Plan is done, might be a useful framework for the meeting. AW will be in touch with MP in due course.

**17. Forward Plan**

CB hoping to get risk register revised to a live digital dashboard

How mid-year review has gone/is due.

Conference touched on already.

LIS/Covid recovery.

Brexit coming closer now - work started already. Jonathan Gullis offered to get meeting with Liz Truss for local business leaders - so we have a good strategy planned for Sept.

JL – Suggests we now re-introduce presentations from businesses/partners, now board meetings are running at pace. A 10 min slot at the start of meetings to raise awareness & interest.

Clr PA - not for businesses to lobby for cash, just raise profile. Some very interesting business out there.

AR - If Board are happy about this MP & I will come up with a list or criteria, for businesses that could present at future meetings

Sub-groups might identify willing partners.

SB – Risk register; issues such as governance, appraisal, succession, training. Shall we bring this back to Forward Plan? i.e. The Board own its own Governance.

SA – obliged to review Assurance Framework annually, so can bring back to Board once done.

**18. AOB**

AR - Spoke to a contact at M6 toll re: campaign for next week to get people moving again.

50% discount for local toll journeys.

Business with tag a/c - 50% discount for 3mths.

**We need to get the message out & ensure our local businesses are aware of discounts.**

Next Covid Taskforce – Rishi Sunaks’s summer update to be discussed.

JL - Queens Award for Enterprise should be promoted.

**Future Board Meeting start time of 4pm.**

**Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 17th September 2020 @ 4pm**

**Location: Via MS Teams.**