

**LEP Company Executive Board Meeting  
via MS Teams conference call  
Thursday 17 September 2020  
Final Minutes**

**Board Directors**

Alun Rogers (Chair)	risual
James Leavesley (Vice Chair)	Leavesley Group
Mohammed Ahmed	Homeserve
Hannah Ault	Valentine Clays
Caroline Brown	Caja Group
Sinéad Butters	Aspire Housing Ltd
Sara Williams	Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce
Prof Liz Barnes	Vice-Chancellor, University of Staffordshire
Prof Trevor McMillan	Vice-Chancellor, University of Keele
Emma Catterall	former Divisional Director of Alton Towers Resort
Cllr Abi Brown	Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Cllr Patrick Farrington	Leader, Stafford Borough Council
Cllr Alan White	Leader, Stafford County Council
Cllr Simon Tagg	Leader, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Cllr George Allen	Deputy Leader, Regen & Planning, East Staffordshire Borough Council

**Advisory/Secretariat**

Mark Parkinson	CEO, Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire LEP
Simon Ablewhite	Section 151 Officer, SSLEP c/o SCC as the Accountable Body
Sam Hicks	Strategy & Research/LIS Lead Office, SSLEP
Jo Kemp	Secretariat/Business Engagement Officer, SSLEP

**In Attendance/Observers**

Jon Rouse	City Director, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Phil Creswell	Director of Place Growth and Prosperity, S-O-T City Council
Craig Jordan	Head of Economic Growth & Development, Lichfield District Council
Mark Gibbons	Regional Senior Energy Project officer, Midlands Energy Hub
Michael Gallagher	Regional Energy Projects Manager, Midlands Energy Hub
Anthony Hodge	Assistant Director Business & Enterprise, Staffordshire County Council
Tim Clegg	CEO, Stafford Borough Council
Cllr Philip White	Deputy Leader, Staffordshire County Council
Martin Hamilton	CEO, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Caroline Mairs	Investment Service Manager, 'Make It Stoke-On-Trent & Staffordshire'

**Apologies**

**1. Introductions**

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

**2. Apologies**

These were noted.

In addition; Cllr Abi Brown was possibly going to be late; Craig Jordan was attending as an observer.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

SW - Kickstart & Growth Hub Peer to Peer Network.

LB & TM – Getting Building Fund for digital health innovation.

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

Minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

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

No delegated decisions had been made on the Boards behalf.

SPMG & SAP updates will follow.

It has been an extremely busy summer, as suggested by this agenda, including;

- Office of the Commissioner for Staffordshire (Police, Fire & Rescue, Crime) business crime strategy refresh discussions have progressed.
- Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) Implementation Plan had been through various iterations
- Make it Stoke-On-Trent & Staffordshire – work has progressed on their service and will be shown later in today's meeting
- Covid-19 Taskforce has continued to meet weekly.

**6. Emerging Implementation Plan incorporating LIS, Covid-19 Recovery & International Trade**

Work had been undertaken with the LEP Chair and the LIS sub-group Chairs to pull together the emerging draft of the LIS Implementation Plan. This has been a positive process and a slide-deck has been put together to highlight the work to date. AR ran through this slide-deck for the Board to view (issued after the Board meeting to Board members).

- It has been sent for approval to various sub-group leads received and further iterations will be brought back to the Executive Board as it is tested and refined with stakeholders.
- The LEP Secretariat c/o SH has worked on the Investment/Project portfolio – also shown on screen by AR.
- Ambition & mission statement identified. These show immediate, medium term & longer-term ambitions.
- Our 4 main policies align with our Sub-Groups of Place, Growing Business, Innovation & future Workforce: **Place** - Levelling up - £485m identified as needed over next 4 years. **Growing Business** – lots of action around start-ups – envisaged £50m needed. **Innovation** – world class aimed for £140m needed. **Future Workforce** £156m to deliver.

- ‘Golden threads’ for policies devised for each group include 5G, Zero Carbon, Maturity of business, progression & upskilling of workforce & positioning LEP as the place to bring it all together.
- A refreshed Implementation plan which SH & Patrick White (Metrodynamics) have worked on ready for Autumn. Slides shown. Same themes around flagship ideas as just seen.
- Investment portfolio broken down by project & necessary output. Really good progress made; detail & maturity needed now. But we can show details of what we want to achieve to powers that be, subject to final refinement.
- LB queried if the financial asks are married up to specific projects?
- SH advised that the document is in 3 stages. Growing Business is under accelerating section fully costed – going through business case appraisal process now. Other things in the pipeline are based on partners costs not yet independently appraised. Various data sources used, prior experience & knowledge & other LEPs intentions. Commissioning intentions - all of which will need to go through various stages including independent advisors.
- AR -These will be run through with Sub-Group leads, but there was not time to send out to them Board pre-meeting.
- MA asked from an Audit & finance viewpoint will we be held to account? i.e. Will figures be clear enough to answer to? Outputs wise, we will need to hold people to account e.g. GVA last year was very hard to measure & therefore accountability was difficult.
- SH confirmed that projects will need to go through SPMG & independent advisors.
- TM – some of LIS projects may already have been worked through with Board, but some may have bubbled up during LIS process & been put into the document, so do we need to build in Governance process annually to concentrate on progress.  
AR suggests that this rigor be discussed at Sub-Groups monthly or quarterly to embed this thinking.
- TM Midlands based discussions have begun to come through certainly in innovation Board, with potential future Board members coming through that group.
- LB – Update on 5G. Government bid – Momentum is growing. Significant work is going in. Bid should go in start of October & hopefully hit the next budget.
- AR requested feedback within the next week once documents are issued (issued Friday 19<sup>th</sup>). Intends to release plans to MPs before the next Board meeting & before fiscal event in November.

## 7. Midlands Energy Hub

Michael Gallagher & Mark Gibbons gave a presentation with slides. The salient points as below:-

- 5 hubs across England. North East Yorkshire & Humber; North West; Midlands; South West & Greater South East.
- They are funded by BEIS, to support LEPs & LAs identify & deliver local energy strategies.
- Local presence is felt to be important. There are allocated Officers who support specific LEP areas, to understand areas & challenges. There are 9 LEPs under the Midlands Hub umbrella.

2 x bolt on programmes since set up.

1. Rural Community Energy Fund (£10m per hub providing grants to Community groups).
  2. Retrofit to reduce poverty, e.g. Green Homes Grant. There is a £300m pot, with the Midlands portion to be confirmed. LAs to implement.
- Information dissemination from BEIS -> Midland Engine -> LA & Local Govt. working with other ‘agencies’

- Collaborate & share effort, remove duplication.
  - Notts CC are the accountable body for Midlands Energy Hub, but Officers are spread across Midlands. Mark Gibbons is this LEPs Officer.
  - High level overview of first 2 years. There is a strong pipeline of 93 projects, valued at £390m. Power, heat & transport are key. There are several district heating projects across the area.
  - Consultancy budget held. Room to support LA for joint ventures on delivery of energy schemes. Let them know if interested.
  - Looking at mine water heating project in a deprived area of Nottingham & looking to develop this nationwide. Potential sites in the LEP area might be flagged.
- Some BEIS Special Projects -
    1. Worcester Council Tax Incentive Scheme report currently embargoed, but hope to share in due course
    2. Social Housing decarbonisation pilot.
    3. Parish Council carbon calculator in Herefordshire - might be useful across the region later.
- Manages the Rural Community energy Fund - £2m in Midlands. In our LEP; Burton RFC & Kinver sports Centre have projects supported.
  - Green Homes Grants are being delivered. An announcement is expected next week around a training element to support this. This could be a good opportunity for FE's for training courses to upskill in these areas.
  - They are seeking a touch-point person at this LEP and LA to act as a Champion. One or the other would then attend meetings. Day to day communication should flow through Mark Gibbons, as the local representative.

#### **Issues raised by Board members;**

- Cllr TC would welcome a conversation about a housing scheme (Garden Village - 10K houses, supported by MHCLG) proposed to be carbon neutral. Could use conversations with Energy Hub to guide them.
- TM - How does this fit with Keele & Stoke projects (SEND & the DHN)? What is the scale of engagement on our LEP area energy projects?
- MG - the Rural Community Energy Funds – just those 2 projects, as it's not been running long - feasibility stage at present.
- MG – Working within SCC with Clive Thompson on Four Ashes Waste Plant heat recovery, Hanford replacement plant feeding into the DHN & looking into Geo-Thermal implications on issues Etruria Valley site. In addition, there are plans for a taxi infrastructure scheme - 40 electric vehicle charge points being installed across the City, N-U-L & Staffs BC, so they are supporting the area.
- SW requested a list of projects, so we understand getting shovel ready projects in the pipeline for 2050 to help speed up pipeline projects.
- MG – the Hub focus on delivery, not early stages of plans, but are keen to bring implementation of projects which are ready.
- JL enquired if Mark & Michael could feedback on solar panel tax deficiencies. Farmers don't want to release ideal land for this, as Inheritance Tax might be affected once panels go onto agricultural land.
- MG advised that they can feed these challenges back into BEIS. i.e. these changes could unlock land. Happy to be conduit.
- LB stated that a map of projects & where they fit with other initiatives, to tie in with TM's point, would be useful.

<https://www.sustainabilitywestmidlands.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Michael-Gallagher-Midlands-Energy-Hub-29.11.18.pdf>

## 8. Inward Investment, Make it Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Steering Group

Sara Williams & Caroline Mairs gave a presentation with slides. The salient points as below:-

- Aligning LEP priorities with 'Make It..', in conjunction with LAs.
- 'Make It..' was created in 2012 - a collaboration with SCC, S-o-T CC & working closely with the LEP. It falls under LEP governance via the 'Inward Investment' group. Funded by LAs & some funds from Midlands Engine.
- The team provides assistance & propositions, identifying sites & arranging visits, industry & market research; brokering contact with Co.'s & local planners; signposts on grants loans & incentives, to get businesses into the area & retain developed businesses.
- HS2 should provide massive opportunity. Publicly & privately.
- The area has attractive costs compared to nearby cities of Birmingham & Manchester.
- Numerous local partners.
- FDI - Foreign Direct Investment - 678 Co's in our area. Fluid definitions though.
- Currently plans for an 'Office Space Campaign' starting in October – a dedicated plan for the next 12mths.
- Working on improving digital strategy.
- Investors want a sense of 'Place' so 'Make it..' site links to 'Enjoy Staffs' too (tourism).
- CM - Light Industrial space is needed, Jobs can then be created then. In some places space is bought off plan as there's not enough. LEP support needed to bring this issue forward, to potentially fund business parks, who can offer light industrial areas.
- PC there is a demand for large sites too, more investors want this & there has been a demonstrable need for 100 hectares + in the north of the region. Office space market has changed.
- SW – 'Make it..'/Inward investment Steering Group is working on all this to inform the LEP & LAs.
- AR advised that huge improvements have been made on understanding 'Make it...' under Inward Investment

## 9. Marketing & Communications update

Hannah Ault updated the Board that implementation of the Marketing and Communications strategy began in May. Emma Wilson, who left the LEP Secretariat last week, helped LEP achieve where we are at today.

- Covid-19 related campaign should have completed last month, but has proved so successful that it is continuing. Including a 'Business Heroes' publication (live next week) joint with LEP/Chambers.
- Agency should be in place by November. The tender has gone out.
- SCC Clare Abbot & Tom Hobbins, Mark Connell from S-o-T CC worked on this too as a collaborative project.
- This promotes the LEP, with the YouTube video working well. Existing channels have grown. Digital Items & case studies have been done. AR's positioning video on YouTube has seen many views, as has 'Getting Building Fund'. Advocacy briefs have been going out weekly for a few months now - thanks to Board member for their involvement in sharing & other groups doing so too.
- Traffic through website has been positive.
- It will be interesting to see how the 'Business Hero' publication lands.
- 9564 businesses have engaged with Skills/Growth Hubs or Triage service
- Newsletter growth +9%
- The open rate is up 6% too. Suggesting we're promoting the right things
- 65% increase in social media reach.

- The Chair's video was well viewed on Twitter.

AR expressed thanks to HA & the team.

#### **10. General Update: Growth Hub Peer Network, Getting Building Fund, Communications Agency services procurement**

MP as the CEO of the LEP confirmed that the Conflicts of Interest items stated at outset of the meeting should not present any issues re what he was going to brief on re Peer to Peer network.

- The Peer to Peer network is receiving a £405k fund. Procurement options are being pursued. The issue will be advanced through the Growth Hub Steering Group in the next few weeks.
- Getting Building Fund. Funds not received yet, but imminent. Hatch Regeneris are working on business plans with scheme promoters and the assessment process is running smoothly.
- Communications – Agency support – The Accountable body has been helpful on procurement and we are on target to get this in place before Christmas.

#### **11. SPMG update: Q1 Outputs**

James Leavesley gave a precis on SPMG activity.

- Project output trajectories on some of the previous schemes are behind the curve on where they should be, and will go through project evaluation process to decide on how long to monitor.
- A plus was that the new Getting Building Fund is working well and we have progressed the Keele IC7 & Staffordshire University Medical & Innovation centre, which went through unanimously last week.
- SPMG worked hard to achieve these business case approval decisions. Good work from Hatch Regeneris & the LEP Secretariat team.

#### **12. Audit & Finance Committee: Full LEP Risk Register**

Caroline Brown advised that she would not go through the entire register, as this has been done with individual groups in the past few weeks.

- We now have an active register. Via SPMG this is looked at on a programme level monthly.
- A new issues register has been defined - clear escalation from risk to issue of when they should be flagged to the board & when to the Audit & Finance Committee.
- Only red risks are to be brought to Board.
- Work is being done on Microsoft application. Worked with Sharon Palphreyman (secretariat) over all of this. Thanks to all the programme teams for the work they've also put in.
- LB asked about recovery of money from projects which have fallen behind - are we confident that we can now move quickly enough?
- AR – improvements have been made. Claw backs in place +1% on top to help with admin in doing so. We need more power in the secretariat to help with this
- CB - we should now be able to identify these risks much earlier & support projects in finding help & active management of projects.
- MA confirmed that we will be taking a more proactive view. Thanks to CB & SP.

#### **13. Mid-year Performance Review**

The LEP CEO advised that Thursday 24th Sept is the date for review by CLG, for this BEIS review. The suggestion is that it will be a supportive conversation, with some pre-audit work completed in advance.

- The LEP Secretariat have worked to align our management information systems to improve governance requirements.
- The LEP CEO intends to work with partners to explain what's needed from them to streamline the process.

**14. LEP Annual Delivery Plan: Update**

Papers show a departure from the previous published version style to a tabular version, so CLGU can better understand intentions. The appendix data will be run past Audit & Finance to ensure understanding & we will update and bring updated versions to the Board twice per annum.

**15. CEO Recruitment Committee**

The interim CEO left the meeting at the start of this conversation. The LEP Chair updated the Board on the progress to date and that the Recruitment Committee were reconvening in October to agree next steps.

**16. LEP Membership: Companies House Update**

AR advised that Cannock Chase, Lichfield & Staffordshire Moorlands Borough/District Board Alternates paperwork has not yet been completed. The LEP Secretariat is in correspondence with the relevant Local Authority offices to ascertain the position.

PF queried that we need to understand any implications from the S151 Officer if the paperwork is not completed.

AR – We will review the Assurance Framework & Articles of Association, as we need clarity.

**17. Scrutiny Arrangements for 2020/21: Update**

MP advise the Board that scrutiny arrangements alternates between S-o-T CC & SCC democratic services.

Craig Sands of S-o-T CC will help support the steering group. Jeremy Oates is invited to attend to ensure District representations are heard too.

**18. Forward Plan**

Forward Plan on agenda.

October

- SAP update. As a LEP we'd like Institute of Technology & Careers Enterprise Company status.

November

- A speaker for DHN is sought - PC is helping with this.
- ESIF committee need to bring an update to the board.

December

- Digital and Equality & Diversity Champion updates needed, to ensure compliance by the year end.

**19. AOB**

- AR advised that he had missed a key item from his Chairs update - Paul Farmer resigned from the Board a few weeks back, leaving a vacancy. Thanks to PF for his Board commitment over previous years.
- Also - Welcome to Emma Catterall – this has been her 1st Board meeting.
- JL – Staffordshire is under-represented in the National Honours – Do we have any more Covid heroes we need to highlight? Or otherwise? Please consider & offer a citation. He is happy to help promote.
- TM & LB – Queried why the Energy Hub have come to us now, to engage.
- MP - LEP secretariat brought them to this Board meeting for information given all the new work they are engaged with relevant to the LIS
- AR had asked them beforehand to ensure they performed for this area, so let's get engaged. He is happy to if no-one else will, but would like to see engagement from this Board.
- SW - happy to step up.

**Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 15th October 2020 @ 4pm**

**Location: Via MS Teams.**