

**STOKE ON TRENT & STAFFORDSHIRE  
LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP  
COMPANY EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING  
15 October 2020  
LEP Review – Assurance Framework Updates**

## **1 Background**

- 1.2 The Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) Assurance Framework sets out the procedures and practices of the Partnership, its Board and sub groups. It is continually kept under review by the LEP Secretariat to ensure that: the SSLEP is fit for delivery of the government’s economic growth agenda; and is fully in line with the National Local Growth Assurance Framework (January 2019). Secretariat reviews also respond to any feedback received in our Mid-Year and Annual Performance Reviews with Cities and Local Growth Unit (CLGU). The work is undertaken by the LEP secretariat, working with Board Directors, overseen by the Accountable Body S151 Finance Officer who is required to confirm to government that the updated document is in line with the National Assurance Framework.

## **2 Assurance Framework Updates**

- 2.1 The Assurance Framework was last presented to the Board for endorsement in May 2020. The following amendments are proposed for inclusion in the updated document, with any significant changes attached as appendices to this report:
- Insertion of a Board Operating Structure diagram (page 12)
  - Inclusion of Roles and Responsibilities of the Chair of the Strategic Programme Management Group (page 21) – attached at Appendix 1 to this report.
  - Minor clarification to roles / job titles in LEP Secretariat (page 41)
  - Minor amendment to matters on which the LEP will be held to account by the Scrutiny Committees of the constituent Local Authorities, to include the Local Industrial Strategy and other matters of strategic importance as well as the Strategic Economic Plan (page 43).
  - Draft minutes to be approved by Chair, disseminated to members of the Board / Group and published within 10 clear working days of the meeting rather than 5, this brings our Assurance Framework in line with the requirements of the national framework (pages 55-56).
  - Update to the LEP Operating Structure Diagram at Appendix 5 of the Constitution (page 59) – the updated and simplified diagram is attached at Appendix 2 to this report.
  - Updates to contact details in the Enquiries, Comments and Complaints Policy (pages 120).

- Section 8 – ‘Business cases, project prioritisation and Grant Funding Agreements’ - changes to layout and specific wording have been made throughout although largely principles remain the same. There is specific additional detail regarding: the publication of final business cases; the management of confidential information in relation to business cases; and the need for business cases to demonstrate how opinions expressed by public and stakeholders have been taken into account (pages 133-4) – these additional paragraphs are attached at Appendix 3 to this report.
- Appendix C to Section 8 ‘Grant Funding Agreement’ has been updated. The revised document is attached at Appendix 4 to this report.

2.3 The Assurance Framework is now a lengthy document so as such has not been circulated. It can be found at the LEP website: <https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/about-us/governance/>. The updated version will be published following this meeting, after Board approval.

2.4 The Assurance Framework is a living document and will be continually updated as required by the Company Board and government policy changes. As it has become lengthier with ongoing additions the Secretariat will also review whether the layout and formatting could be improved. The Framework will be brought to Board for consideration biannually, as a minimum. While minor changes will be notified to and agreed by the S151 Officer, and mid-review changes of note will continue to be brought to the Board for agreement.

**Recommendation: That the Board endorses the publication of the Assurance Framework (September 2020 v8).**

**Lead Officer:** Mark Parkinson, Chief Executive SSLEP

**Report Author:** Lucy Sefton, Governance and Project Officer SSLEP

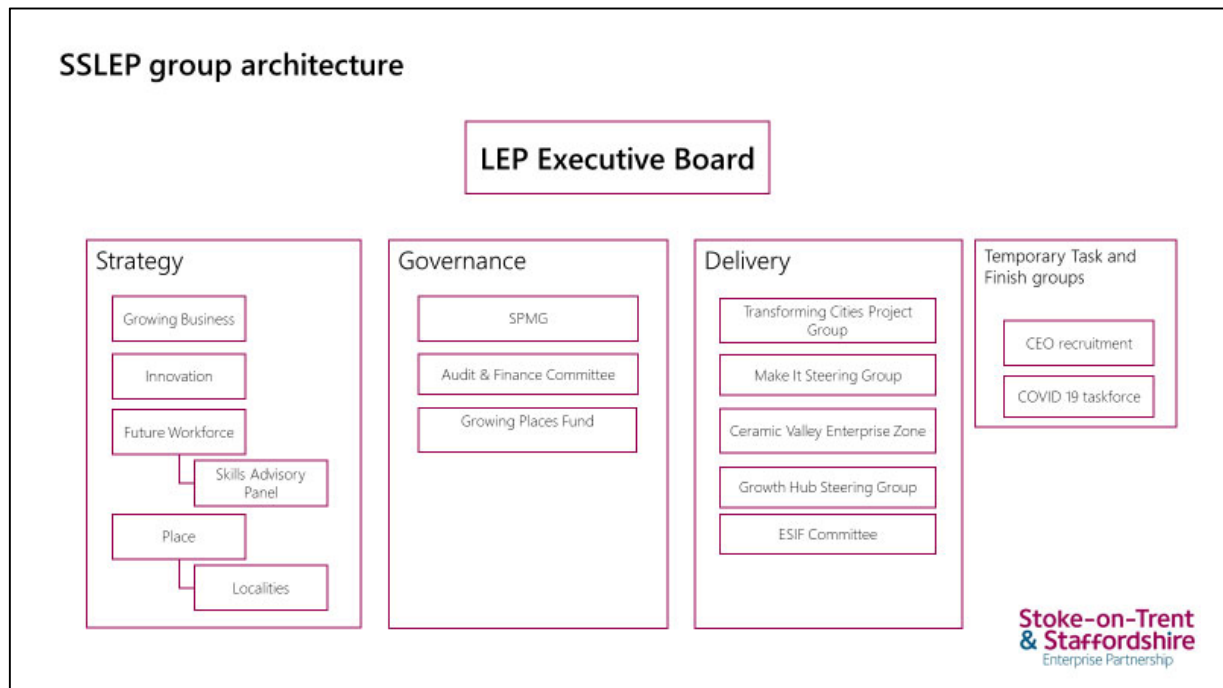
## **Appendix One**

### **Role & Responsibilities of the Chair of SSLEP's Strategic Programme Management Group**

- To provide leadership and direction to SPMG Members, ensuring that the Group is: run in strict accordance with the terms of reference and in a transparent and equitable manner; that any conflicts of interest of members are properly identified and acted upon; that all Members are actively engaged in contributing to the work of the Group; and that effective decisions are made, minuted and actioned.
- To promote full appreciation among group members that SPMG has an appropriate balance of strategic and operational/fiduciary matters.
- To ensure that the Group operates the business case appraisal, prioritisation & approval process set out in the SSLEP Assurance Framework using the criteria set by the LEP Executive Board in operating open calls & commissions.
- To ensure Members utilise the support of the Independent Technical Appraiser, where appropriate, in ensuring Members consider all relevant project & programme details and all relevant matters are discussed and considered in arriving at a set of investable priority projects/programmes which achieve best value and the desired outcomes of the Board.
- To ensure the diversity of views of the membership and other relevant parties where appropriate are heard in undertaking the work of the group.
- To ensure projects & programmes identified through the work of the group provide the best possible programme in delivering against SSLEP's publicly available strategies and business plans and give the best opportunity to achieve desired outcomes.
- To lead the group in undertaking project & programme performance monitoring in a positive manner which supports delivery partners to meet milestones, targets and achieve desired outcomes, whilst holding underperforming schemes to account.
- To ensure the Group has full details available in discussing project & programme risks in order to support strong delivery and managing risks by identification of mitigating actions to minimise risks and/or reduce risks to an acceptable level.
- To be responsible for the maintenance of the SPMG Risk Register as this relates to project & programme performance and management and to ensure key risks are reported to the Audit & Finance Committee.

- To provide leadership, support and advice to SPMG Members, establishing collaborative working relationships which built trust and confidence within SPMG itself and within SSLEP Executive Board.
- To report back to the SSLEP Executive Board in reporting on activities undertaken by SPMG.
- To undertake an annual review on the work of the group with members and officers to examine what went well and areas that might be improved in undertaking the work of SPMG.
- To ensure that SSLEP complies with the National Local Growth Assurance Framework (January 2019), regularly reviewing and updating its Assurance Framework where needed.

## Appendix Two - Operating Structure



### **Appendix Three - Additions to Section 8 Business cases, project prioritisation and Grant Funding Agreements**

Final business cases will be published with any confidential elements managed in accordance with the constitution and Departmental requirements, for example, summaries of the transport business case documents (OBC and FBC) will be published on the SSLEP and scheme promoter websites prior to a funding approval decision being made where practical in terms of central government timescales or similar external constraints. This will allow for external comment. However, there will be a small number of exceptions to this rule where explicit reasons are given for not publishing information, such as that the material is commercially sensitive. It is recommended that the summaries are publicly available on the scheme promoter websites for a up to a 3 month period prior to a funding approval decision, although the length of consultation can be determined in accordance with the needs of the scheme promoters.

Opinions expressed by the public and stakeholders will be made available by scheme promoters to SPMG, to further inform decision making. In doing so, scheme promoters and SPMG will be required to identify (and make public via the SSLEP website) how external comments have been taken into account prior to a funding approval decision.

#### **Project appraisal prioritisation and approval**

The LEP will seek the submission of projects for evaluation and prioritisation through an open call process or commissioning process, as needed. The LEP will maintain a pipeline of projects to deliver its strategic plans, consistent with Government bidding calls and the level of funding available.