**2020-21 Mid-Year Review**

**Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership**

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| Location: Microsoft Teams | Attendees: |
| Date: 24/09/2020 | * Andrea Whitworth, Area Lead, CLGU (Chairing the meeting) * David Smith, CLGU Corporate Support (Note Taker) * Alun Rogers, Chair SSLEP * Mark Parkinson, CEO SSLEP * Simon Ablewhite, Accountable Body & S151 Representative |
| Time: 12:30-14:00 |

**Actions from 2019-20 Annual Performance Review**

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| **Action** | **Action Point** | **Date completed** | **Resolution** |
| 1 | All Performance, Risk and Audit sub-groups along with Project and Programme Delivery sub-groups to be fully operational with clear reporting to the LEP board. | Sept 2020 | All sub-groups fully operational. The Delivery Plan MIS DP#2.2 provides a schedule of reporting to Board. The Executive Board slide-deck now provides a graphical reminder of ‘operating structures’ to support Forward Plan. Refresh of ‘operating structure’ diagram in Assurance Framework schedule at Q3. |
| 2 | CEO recruitment to be completed by May. | June 20 | CEO in place from June 2020 under a six-month secondment. Executive Board received paper in July and recruitment committee to meet in September 2020 to agree approach to permanent appointment. Process to be supported by professional external recruitment agency. |
| 4 | LEP to evidence induction process and ensure governance requirements are fully understood by new board members and acted on. | Sept 20 | An induction event held Feb 19th for new Board members. Led by Chair and Partnership Manager. Further induction event held in Sept, led by (Chair), S151 officer and CEO. LEP Secretariat use of structured slide-deck at meetings ensures that necessary governance processes are adhered to and records maintained. |
| 5 | A new LEP Communications & Marketing Strategy is being prepared with a draft to be in place by end March | June- 20 | Strategy agreed at June Board. Procurement exercise underway to appoint agency before Christmas. Staffs County support will then be scaled back but some support will be retained under contract. Board now receives regular updates on performance of campaigns. Increased activity is evident on Twitter, LEP newsletters etc. Introduction of advocacy brief for board and partners. |
| 5 | CLGU to set out for the LEP the impact on the APR assessment if this vacancy remains unfilled (n.b. Gender balance) | March - 20 | LEP actively drove recruitment in early 2020 to fill vacancies successfully and ensured gender balance targets not only met but exceeded. Currently the LEP is at 44% female representation on the Executive Board thus meeting National Local Growth Assurance Framework requirements and making progress towards the 50% target by March 2023. This is actively recorded and monitored via LEP MIS. |
| 6 | The Company Secretary function to become more visible at LEP Board Meetings (not least for the benefit of new board members) for example in confirming a meeting is quorate, ensuring appropriate action is taken when conflicts of interests arise etc. | Sept - 20 | This function is currently carried out by the accountable body and the deputy S151 officer attends all board meetings to ensure this function is visible. The LEP Secretariat use a supporting slide-decks to structure meetings and ensure that relevant governance is adhered to. |
| 7 | A review of forecasting should be undertaken by the LEP to ensure that all forecasts submitted at Q1 2020-21 across all LGF projects are as accurate as possible as the LEP enters the final year of contracted delivery. | Sept - 20 | Q1 return submitted to CLGU with forecasts for the year ahead. Now part of the LEP Secretariat BAU and addressed at A&F/SPMG/Executive Board meetings. Discussed at the September Board. |
| 8 | The LEP board should be better sighted on the City Deal projects. The LEP will consider how to achieve this in 20-21. | In-hand to be closed in Oct 2020. | Stoke-on-Trent District Heat Network project to be presented to Executive Board in October Board to provide an update on progress.  Keele SEND Project presentation received at Board in Q1. |
| 9 | LEP to provide CLGU with its draft Evaluation plan by 17 February | Feb 2020 | Evaluation Plan co-produced by Jon Vining and Mark Connell for the LEP submitted to CLGU in February 2020. |
|  | LIS Advisory Sub-groups to be fully operational with a remit to drive forward LEP policy priorities. | Sept 2020 | All sub-groups fully operational. The LEP’s Delivery Plan DP#2.2 includes a schedule of reporting to Board. Executive Board slide-deck includes reminder of ‘operating structures’ to support Forward Plan clearly indicating sub-group activity. |
|  | The LEP Chair and CLGU Interim Area Director to arrange discussions to explore how the LEP should further develop. The LEP will identify what areas it would like to explore in these sessions. | SEPT - 20 | Superseded/evolved. Area Director has moved role. Ongoing dialogue with Area Lead and Deputy Area Lead. |
|  | The outstanding actions in the 19-20 Improvement Plan will continue to be monitored by CLGU and the LEP monthly. | June - 20 | Actions in the 19-20 Improvement Plan have been completed. LEP is now driving Improvement as BAU and reflected in the ToR for LEP Secretariat. |

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| **Improvement Plan** (where applicable) |
| N/A All actions from the previous improvement plan have been completed. No improvement plan required from April 2020. |
| **Governance** |
| Progress against the LEP’s diversity statement.  The LEP actively monitors the Gender Balance via its MIS. Currently the LEP is compliant with National Local Growth Assurance Framework (NLGAF) at 44% female. It is working towards the 50% target by 2023.  In line with NLGAF best practice a report will be made to the Board in December 2020 discussing progress in encouraging diversity and how improvements can be made. This will be taken by the LEP Board’s Diversity Lead.  It was noted that the LEP has two vacant Private Sector board positions. The Chair and CEO confirmed that recruitment to these positions is active. The Chair reflected that recent appointments to the board had been high quality and he was keen to ensure that future appointments were of equal quality and not rush into selections.  Annual Report and Delivery Plan progress  The Annual Report for 2019/20 was published for September AGM and will be promoted at Autumn Conference using the wider Comms Strategy (Channels/Media, e.g. Short Video via Social Media). It is available on the LEP Website.  The Delivery Plan was presented to the September Exec Board and is available on the website. A public facing version is to be prepared for Autumn Conference.  Delivery Plan progress is monitored through the LEP Secretariat’s ‘Driving Performance’ and addressed at the Executive Board & A&F Committee. It will go back to the executive board twice a year to agree updates.  Both documents have been produced ahead of the revised target date of December, which was agreed for all LEPs as an exemption to the NLGAF target due to COVID.  Other National Local Growth Assurance Exemptions  The LEP has not needed to take up other agreed exemptions to the NLGAF.  Further discussions may be needed regarding board membership if recruitment is hampered by COVID and impacts on the requirement to maintain a 66% private sector membership of the LEP.  Managing Risk  The LEP has continued to revise and develop its approach to risk management over the last year. A 1st Iteration of a revised Risk Register was presented to SPMG and the Executive Board in Sept 2020. This will be subject to further development but CLGU noted that this risk register was a considerable improvement on past versions and the approach now being taken by the LEP demonstrated that it was actively managing risk.  Risk management is now formally embedded in management processes.  The LEP identifies that the continuing overlapping LEP Geography and associated LEP Funding Issues to be a continuing risk that needs early resolution.  Other main risks relate to the delivery of City Deal and LGF. Interventions in place but outputs are on a delayed trajectory. SPMG and the Exec Board are fully aware and monitoring accordingly.  National Assurance Framework Compliance (other)  The LEP stated that its Secretariat will review recent national reports on LEP capacity and capabilities and an assessment of economic performance across LEP areas to see where SSLEP might be able to improve.  The LEP was made aware that CLGU will be conducting annual checks against the NLGAF requirements and the LEP should ensure that the website is up to date with the necessary information. The LEP noted that recent updates had been made to the website including updating project summaries. It will be important for the LEP to address any compliance issues identified through the checks within a 5-day timeframe.  The LEP is reminded that while the deputy S151 officer attends board meetings routinely the S151 Officer should attend at least one LEP Board meeting in the accounting year.  Summary  The LEP has made great strides in its approach to governance over the last 12-18 months. The last annual performance review noted that the LEP had progressed from requiring improvement to good. Since then further improvements have been made, including the Improvement Plan being fully addressed, which have further embedded improved governance procedures into the LEP’s way of working. The LEP Chair noted his thanks to the current CEO and former Interim Partnership Manager for their considerable efforts in this respect. |
| **Delivery** |
| Local Growth Fund (LGF) delivery (with reference to Quarter 1 returns and updates from the June review, including any further Covid-19 impacts)  SSLEP and S151 officer expect the LEP to spend LGF fully by the year end.  Following the LGF Review, undertaken by CLGU, SPMG approved the redirection of funding from two schemes that were underspending to another scheme that was able to utilise the funding immediately. This has ensured LGF spend is on track.  £8.71m of LGF was expended in quarter 1, which is a third of the total forecast spend for the year and ahead of profile. The LEP has further mitigation in place to ensue that full spend is delivered by the end of the year. Regular reports are made to SPMG & Exec Board.  Output targets for March 2021 will not be met. Outputs remain on a delayed trajectory despite interventions made to address the situation. More recently progress has been impacted by COVID delaying investment and housing development.  The LEP expects to achieve 4,102 jobs by March 2021 against a target of 5,000 (82%) and 455 houses against a target of 1,000 (45%). However, by 2025 the LEP is forecasting 14,671 jobs and 6,215 houses. It is recognised that in the present circumstances there is little that might be now be done to further accelerate jobs or houses by March 2021. Rather the LEP is keen to learn lessons and work is ongoing to profile jobs and housing delivery over the next 4-5 years.  One lesson that the LEP has acted upon is that early project assessments may not have been as thorough as they should have been. Arrangements put in place over the last 18months have ensured a more rigorous assessment process. Another lesson implemented is tighter funding agreements related to delivery.  It was noted that the reporting to SMPG of City Deal outputs should now include progress towards carbon reduction targets. The LEP will address this in future reports.  Evaluation Plan Implementation  SPMG has a role in overseeing project closure reports and the implementation of the Evaluation Plan. They then report to the Executive Board.  The LEP needs to ensure that the evaluation plan shared with CLGU in February 2020 is being implemented for LGF projects. The original evaluation plan categorised projects and identified the appropriate level of evaluation to be undertaken for each category of project.  The LEP should ensure that the quarterly data returns to CLGU are updated to include the appropriate evaluation process for each project.  The Evaluation Plan will need to be updated with GBF projects in due course. CLGU will be sharing further information regarding monitoring and reporting of GBF in due course. The expectation is that this will be broadly similar to LGF.  Getting Building Fund arrangements and progress made to date  The arrangements put in place by the LEP to identify a range of appropriate projects in response to the call from Government have worked well. The LEP worked with its independent assessor to set clear criteria and ensure all submissions were assessed against these ahead of final project selection. Effective stakeholder communications were established from the start. Business case assessments have been undertaken by the independent assessor with SPMG responsible for project approvals.  CLGU to provide the LEP with details of GBF Grant offer Letter requirements as soon as possible.  By exception: key points to make in relation to the Growth Hub, including Peer Network delivery; City Deal (SEND and DHN); Growing Places & Ceramic Valley EZ  The LEP’s Forward Plan arrangements clearly set out when the Executive Board will receive updated reports on each of the funding streams and programmes. This ensures that over the course of a year the Executive Board remain sighted on progress and delivery.  The new Peer Networks programme is in hand with the LEP is currently at the delivery procurement stage. This will be a challenging contract to deliver but relates directly to a need identified by the LEP in its LIS.  The LEP has been working with the LEP network to feed into its work on Enterprise Zones in readiness for SR submission.  It should be noted that the Growth Hub has been exceptionally busy during COVID responding successfully to a huge increase in the demand for help and support and delivering a range of new local support measures. |
| **Strategic Impact** |
| Recovery and Growth Planning  The LEP Partnership has used its convening power to co-ordinate local stakeholders responses to economic shocks. The Countywide Redundancy Taskforce that has successfully brought together partners from the private, public and third sectors. Alongside this the LEP has led the strategic SSLEP Covid-19 Task Force, which has met weekly to share intelligence and develop a local recovery response.  A draft recovery / LIS implementation plan has been prepared and discussed at the September Executive Board. Alongside this the LEP has prepared an investment plan which sets out short, medium- and long-termed interventions to deal with pandemic response and Brexit related International Trade. The draft has been shared with CLGU.  The LEP Secretariat is also engaged in the local Civil Contingency group, the local recovery forum to support the Recovery Coordinating Group.  The tactical and operational approach taken by the LEP and its Partners has stood up well to heavy demand on services to-date. The LEP has welcomed the additional resources provided, for example for the Growth Hub.  The LEP is eager for information relating to future funding opportunities to be able to deliver on its plans and priorities in response to COVID, levelling up and maximising growth opportunities in the LEP area. |
| **LEP Feedback** |
| Barriers / Issues  LEP Partners accept that the conventional 5-Year parliamentary term of setting policy through to implementation has been disrupted due to the pandemic and Brexit considerations and that there is a need to be flexible and adaptable to a constantly changing situation. Consequently, the LEP will continue to keep its operational policies under review to ensure the Sub-Groups, Board and Secretariat are well-placed to respond to short-term demands (e.g. fiscal events).  The LEP has been working with the LEP network to shape the Networks’s CSR submission.  The LEP has reinvigorated its focus on inward investment with a new private-sector chair for the sub-group and is looking to expand and develop its offer.  The LEP is working closely with DIT on the appointment of additional international trade advisors working as part of the growth hub team.  Major milestones, other projects and challenges expected in 2020-21  The LEP will continue to balance Strategy, Delivery & Governance requirements. The LIS Implementation Plan will be the focus for next few years as many existing programmes and projects wind-down.  The LEP awaits the publication of the Local Recovery and Devolution White Paper and what this might say about the future role LEPs will play in the recovery process as well as the levelling up agenda. The Partnership feels well-placed with its emerging plans and stronger governance to respond to future requirements.  The Staffordshire 5G Connected Region Growth Deal will remain a priority. An outline strategic business case is in development and will be submitted to government shortly. This is seen as vitally important to the area’s levelling up plans and more than this will enable the area to get ahead. |
| **AOB** |
| It was noted that the LEP continues to make significant progress. Its new and revised ways of working are ensuring a much stronger governance structure, a more coherent and effective secretariat and clearer strategic direction. |

**Action Points**

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|  | **Action Point** | **Owner** | **Date to be completed** | **Date completed** | **Resolution** |
| 1 | LEP to maintain active focus on private sector recruitment to ensure both gender and public / private ratios, as set out in the National Assurance Framework, are maintained. | Chair / CEO | Dec 2020 |  |  |
| 2 | City Deal Carbon Emissions Reduction Targets should now form part of the regular reporting to SMPG. | SSLEP Programme Manager | Dec 2020 |  |  |
| 3 | LEP to ensure that the Evaluation Plan in relation to LGF projects is implemented and for quarterly data returns to CLGU to be updated to reflect appropriate evaluation process for each project. | SSLEP CEO and Programme Manager | Dec 2020 |  |  |
| 4 | Monthly meetings to be reinstated between CLGU Area Lead, LEP CEO & S151. | Area Lead / CEO | Oct 2020 |  |  |
| 5 | CLGU to raise issue with ONS about that its LEP level data (Nomis) attaches local authorities to a “Primary LEP”. This has potential implications for any LEP with district councils that overlap two LEP areas. | CLGU Area Lead | Sept 2020 |  |  |
| 6 | Details of the Grant Offer Letter for GBF to be shared with the LEP. | Andrea Whitworth | Oct 2020 |  | T |
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