

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Annual Performance Review 2020-21

Location: MS TEAMS
Date: 4 February 2021
Time: 10am

Actions from 2020-21 Mid-Year Review

Action #	Action Point	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.	Ongoing	Recruitment process is underway with 5 candidates in the frame. Appointments expected to be confirmed by end of March. New action agreed to reflect current position.
2	City Deal Carbon Emissions Reduction Targets should now form part of the regular reporting to SPMG.	Ongoing	Data will not be available until later in 2021. New action agreed to reflect current position
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.	Ongoing	The LEP is not content with the existing evaluation procedures and has commissioned Hatch (consultants) to produce a more rigorous process that will provide better quality information to SPMG. New action agreed to reflect current position
4	Monthly meetings to be reinstated between CLGU Area Lead, LEP CEO & S151.	September 20	
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.	January 21	ONS has made the necessary changes.
6	Details of the Grant Offer Letter for GBF to be shared with the LEP.	October 20.	Grant Offer Letter issued to LEP.

Annual Performance Review

Governance

- It was noted in the pre-APR Assurance Framework compliance checks that the LEP's gifts and hospitality policy and register were not available on the LEP website (although the published bi-annual register of interest returns declarations from all Board Members / relevant officers). Both the policy and a combined register were published on 6th January 2020. CGLU confirmed compliance.
- The ratio of private to public board members is currently below the required 66% at 63% because of two unfilled vacancies. A recruitment process is underway and due to be completed in March (see actions).
- The board currently comprises 44% of women and is actively working towards 50%.
- The LEP's Equality and Diversity Champion took a report to the December board meeting with recommendations to further develop Equality and Diversity beyond board representation. The recommendations were agreed. An Equality and Diversity framework is to be developed for agreement with the LEP board later in the year. The LEP is keen to become an exemplar in this area and use its position to promote awareness and good practice within the wider business community.
- The Accountable Body has undertaken its annual independent assurance audit of the LEP's governance. The draft report has been received. Minor recommendations for improvement are identified. Final report will be shared with CLGU.
- The LEP continues to operate its continuous improvement processes across all of its operations. Currently incorporating the imminent LEP Network Peer Reviews.
- The LEP scrutiny arrangements have been completed successfully in 2020, however the LEP is continuing to review these to identify improvements that will benefit both the LEP and the local authority members undertaking the scrutiny.
- The S151 representative noted that the accountable body has a strong confidence in the governance procedures in place in LEP. The independent appraisal process operated over the last year was cited as an example of a really significant improvement in the governance.
- The LEP raised the ongoing situation with overlapping geography. It remains on the LEP risk register, however the methodology used to allocate the Getting Building Fund had provided some clarity. The LEP reported it had significant and active engagement with all local authorities across the LEP area.

Delivery

- The LEP presented a slide with an overview of the progress with Getting Building Fund. This shows that all projects are approved, 7 are fully contracted (£13.5m) 3 are in the contract process (£4.9m) and 1 has started with another to follow shortly. Pipeline projects are being assessed following the withdrawal of one project leaving £190k to be reallocated. GBF spend at Q3 was £3.4m, which is seen as very creditable in the short time the programme has been operating. Drakelow project is being managed by D2N2 with SSLEP contributing funding. The LEPs are in regular contact and working closely.
- On course to spend LGF by end of March 2021, most likely without the need to utilise freedoms and flexibilities. The LEP is demonstrating active programme management, working closely with the Accountable Body to ensure projects are being supported to deliver, with contingency plans and mitigation identified if needed. One remaining contract (Blythe Park) to sign but spend will be achieved up front once signing complete. The situation on outputs is well understood. The LEP continues to monitor the situation closely and is forecasting that targets will be met by 2025 – although these are very back loaded. The LEP is keen to improve its communication around projects to enable stakeholders to understand the reasons for the backloaded delivery of outputs and have confidence that the forecasts are realistic.
- The Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone continues to be a flagship project – with proposals to come to the LEP SPMG in March around continuing incentives to attract businesses to locate on the zone.
- Growing Places Fund proceeding well.
- The LEP has been successful in getting its Peer Network Programme underway. Strong Christmas and New Year period. 12 Cohorts delivered by March with another 12 to follow in the summer.
- Both the Delivery Plan and Conference Brochure available on the LEP website.
- The Growth Hub has had a demanding year and has responded well. Additional resources have been utilised to provide a comprehensive support package to local business during the transition period.

Strategic Impact

- The LEP has used its convening power to establish the County-wide Redundancy Task Group and the Covid-19 Task Force. These groups have successfully brought together partners from the private, public and third sectors.
- The LEP is now much more visible and widening its influence. It is frequently engaged by wider stakeholders. Currently working with Police around a business crime strategy with the LEP chairing a Business Crime Strategy Board. It also sits on the Network Staffordshire Group. LEP Board Member Hannah Ault chairs the Staffordshire Brand Board.
- The LEP Secretariat is engaged in the Civil Contingency Local Recovery Forum to support the Recovery Coordinating Group.

- The Local Industrial Strategy remains a key strategic document for the LEP. The LIS Implementation Plan continues to be developed. Alongside this will sit a portfolio of projects document. The implementation plan is being framed to emphasise short and medium termed interventions to deal with the pandemic response and to respond to the UK EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement.
- LEP Sub-groups continue to mature and develop and are key to driving the LIS forward.

LEP Feedback

- LEP will continue to balance Strategy, Delivery & Governance requirements and will continue to focus on its LIS Implementation Plan as other programmes/projects wind down.
- The future Local Recovery and Devolution White Paper is seen as key in helping set the future direction of LEPs.
- The lack of clarity around the future of LEPs is frustrating and stifling the LEP. The LEP feels that the progress made by the Board and Secretariat means that it is in a strong position to respond to the current economic situation and it is frustrating that it hasn't been given the means to do so. Confident that it could deliver a significant recovery programme at low risk.
- The LEP would welcome a dialogue with Government to get a clearer understanding of the position.
- LEP Chair acknowledged the support the LEP has had from partners and stakeholders.
- He particularly acknowledged the support of the Accountable Body and hard work of the Secretariat in the progress of the LEP.
- Finally, the LEP thanked CLGU for its support.

AOB

- The Accountable Body echoed the points made about the progress of the LEP and stated that the LEP could deliver more given the funding. It has the mechanisms in place to ensure public money is spent correctly, achieves value for money and is targeted in the right places. and the late notification of funding causes frustration (e.g. additional EU Transition Funding that was confirmed on the 3 February to be spend by end of March). However, the LEP is fully geared up to deliver this and will do so.

Action Points

Action #	Action Point	Owner	Date to be completed	Date completed	Resolution
1	LEP to complete its recruitment process to fill two private sector vacancies and ensure both	LEP Chair / CEO	31/03/21		

	gender and public / private ratios, as set out in the National Assurance Framework, are met.				
2	City Deal Carbon Emissions Reduction Targets to be reported as part of the regular performance reporting to SMPG. Data from the SEND project will be available from late spring 21. Data from the DHN will not be available for another 18 months.	SSLEP Programme Manager	30/09/21		
3	LEP to agree and implement a more rigorous project evaluation process. A briefing paper to go to SPMG in Q1 2021 and the new process implemented in Q2 2021.	LEP CEO	30/09/21		
4	Accountable body to share final Assurance Audit Report when available.	S151 Representative	31/05/21		

Attendees:

- Andrea Whitworth, Area Lead, CLGU (Chairing the meeting)
- Clare Hannah, Deputy Area Lead, CLGU
- Saleha Jebeen CLGU
- Alun Rogers, Chair SSLEP
- Mark Parkinson, CEO SSLEP
- Simon Ablewhite, Accountable Body & S151 Representative
- Sharon Palphreyman SSLEP Programme Manager
- Lucy Sefton SSLEP Governance and Project Officer