

**LEP Company Executive Board Meeting
via MS Teams conference call
Thursday 20 May 2021
Minutes**

Board Directors

Alun Rogers (Chair)	Risual
James Leavesley (Vice Chair)	Leavesley Group
Mohammed Ahmed	Homeserve
Hannah Ault	Valentine Clays
Trevor McMillan	Vice-Chancellor, Keele University
Sinéad Butters	Aspire Housing Ltd
Caroline Brown	Caja Group
Emma Catterall	Camping & Caravanning Club
Sara Williams	Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce
Cllr Sybil Ralphs	(Alternate) Leader, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Cllr Alan White	Leader, Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Abi Brown	Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Cllr Patrick Farrington	Leader, Stafford Borough Council

Advisory/Secretariat

Simon Ablewhite	SSLEP Accountable Body
Anne Boyd	SSLEP Chief Executive
Lucy Sefton	SSLEP Secretariat/Project Officer
Sam Hicks	SSLEP Policy Officer

In Attendance

Tim Clegg	Chief Executive, Stafford Borough Council
Mark Connell	Strategic and Partnerships Manager, Stoke-On-Trent City Council
Bryan Jones	Deputy Leader, Cannock Chase District Council
Martin Hamilton	Chief Executive, Newcastle -under-Lyme Borough Council
Prof. Martin Jones	Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Staffordshire
Nicola Kent	SSLEP Growth Hub
Jon Rouse	City Director, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Clare Abbots	Head of Communications SSLEP
Racheal Johnson	Head of Strategy, Social Media Agency

Apologies

Liz Barnes	Vice-Chancellor, University of Staffordshire
Cllr Simon Tagg	Leader, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Cllr Olivia Lyons (Cannock Chase)	Leader, Cannock Chase District Council

1. Introductions

The Chair welcomed attendees.

2. Apologies

These were noted, as above. Meeting confirmed as quorate by SA.

3. Declarations of Interest

SW Contractual provider of Growth Hub services.

4. Notes of the previous meeting and matters arising

Minutes were agreed. No comments.

5. Chair's Update and Delegated Decisions

The Chair informed the Board of his activity during the month:

- National meeting regarding Growth Hub with BEIS, picked up later in the agenda. Hannah stepped down as chair of Steering Group – AR or JL will pick up going forward, item 6,7 and 10 on the agenda.
- Powering Up City Forum
- CEO and Leader 1 to 1s
- LEP Chairs: West Midlands and ME9

6. LEP Review (Confidential)

The minutes for this item are confidential.

Action

AR and AB to check that the content within the slides can be shared with Board following the meeting.

7. Forward Plan and Budget (Confidential in part)

AR introduced the item, explaining he had asked AB to consider 30, 60 and 90 day plans upon recruitment. Notwithstanding current uncertainty, the presentation set out proposals for the future of the SSLEP. It was emphasised that the focus was to lay foundations that would enable the LEP to progress at pace and be focussed on the wider economy and recovery rather than too inward looking because of the LEP review.

Three core areas

- Building on foundations:
 - aligning our plans (LIS) with the Plan for Growth;
 - continued management of investments;
 - Net-Zero plan / statement of ambition;
 - stakeholder engagement plan;
 - introduce Net Promoter Score;
 - business support review; and
 - re-brand.
- Demonstrate strong governance;
 - align Growth Hub;
 - review sub-committees;

- enhanced Board and ensure diversity;
- engage next generation; and
- integrate improvement plan into a single annual business plan.
- Equip our operational team;
 - single team;
 - enhanced capacity; and
 - aligned to function and strategy.

An improved planning cycle was outlined to deliver consistency and synergy in planning.

Further discussion in relation to staffing structures and budget was confidential.

Action

The Board requested a more detailed paper for their June meeting addressing the issues discussed.

8. SPMG Update

JL informed the Executive Board that the last SPMG meeting had been postponed as further information was required for SPMG to make an informed decision regarding which contingency projects should go ahead, especially given there was a possibility that some of the projects wouldn't need as much money as they had originally asked for.

He highlighted that the end of grant report for Local Growth Fund showed that some of the projects would not achieve their output targets (in particular in relation to house and jobs) within the initial timescales (although reasons for this had been shared with BEIS and revised timescales been agreed). There were other outputs relating to qualifications achieved, new roads, cycle and water ways, and delivery of training space where the LEP had exceeded delivery targets.

In relation to Getting Building Fund – Board were assured that all remaining funding would be allocated by the end of the next meeting. In relation to Drakelow, D2N2 LEP (the lead body) were scheduled to attend SPMG in June.

9. Audit and Finance Committee

MA provided an update to Board, highlighting that most schemes were on track.

He acknowledged (with reference to the Peer Network) that the A&F Committee had been quite focussed on capital budgets and would be placing more focus on revenue going forward.

He commented that the A&F Committee had endorsed the budget proposed by AB and would assist in coming back to Board on the issues that had been raised in the discussion.

All red issues on the risk register were in hand / being actively managed.

Action

Future paper to Board regarding revised role of A&F Committee including potential greater focus on revenue budgets.

10. Growth Hub Award (S1 / S3 Confidential)

AB explained the process for Government awarding funding for Growth Hub activity. An initial offer letter was received by the LEP, after which forms S1 and S3, setting out how the money would be spent, had to be completed and returned to receive the funding. NK and AB had co-produced the S1 and S3 this year, and these were provided to Board for their information and endorsement. AB felt it important for the Board to have sight of the funding award and understand associated accountabilities and liabilities

The Board:

- discussed the relative size of the Growth Hub compared to others and how that compared to its achievements. AB explained that funding allocation was based on business population. Agreed the forms did not include any reference to matched or leveraged funding – i.e. from the Chambers of Commerce or County Council;
- SA requested that AB further ‘unpack’ the details of the Growth Hub so they are fully understood by the Board
- noted the complexity of funding and reporting arrangements and the need to bring greater clarity to that;
- thanked HA for her work on the GH Steering Group to ensure a closer alignment between the GH and the Board;

Action

Head of Growth Hub to report to CEO and therefore the Board. AR emphasised this was not a change per se as the Growth Hub was deemed by Government to be the direct responsibility of the LEP

11. Annual Report 2020/21

HA explained this year’s annual report would be a celebration of the LEP and its achievements, set out in a more engaging and dynamic way than in previous years, whilst still meeting the reporting requirements of Government. Media and marketing agency ‘Social’, who were also working with the LEP on a wider re-brand / reinvigorated communications strategy, had been commissioned to work with the LEP Secretariat to produce the report.

SSLEP Head of Communications, CA, emphasised that the Annual Report was a significant opportunity for the LEP to achieve reputational gains.

RJ from Social, presented initial content proposals, timelines and design concepts to the Board.

Action

The Board agreed to delegate sign-off of the Annual Report to HA, in conjunction with AB and Secretariat in relation to fact checking.

12. LEP Executive Board Recruitment

AR, CB and GA had interviewed 3 candidates in the last month. One candidate had an immediate conflict of interest in relation to being appointed to the Board, but there was potential for them to be engaged in LEP work in other ways. One candidate was considered appropriate for the offer of a Board seat. However, having considered the make-up and expertise of the current board it was felt that there was a gap in relation to experience of advanced manufacturing and exporting so the recruitment committee had agreed to advertising again prior to offering any Board positions. All interviewed candidates had been informed of this outcome.

Action

Further recruitment round to be undertaken prior to making any offers.

13. Forward Plan

Agreed that a further paper on future structure would be brought to the June meeting.

TC offered to bring a presentation on the Future High Street Fund to the July meeting.

MJ – noted the need to keep Skills on the agenda as Government plans were accelerating.

SW – raised the question of College membership of Board, particularly given direction of Government policy in this area, specifically in relation to proposals that colleges failing to meet local labour market needs could be taken over.

Action

AB to update the Forward Plan.

14. Any Other Business

JL – noted that there had been 3 award winners for Queens Award in Enterprise. Also alerted members interested in seeking royal visits that participation in the ‘green canopy’ scheme would be important.

SW – informed Members that they should have received / would be receiving an invite to reopening of Chambers in June.

Cllr AB – noted:

- the successful City Forum launch;
- news of Home Office jobs moving to Stoke - following Places for Growth bid;
- Stoke were planning to take part in the green canopy scheme; and
- in last few days had been notified they would be allowed to investigate a clean air zone.

AR noted that the areas had received 3 ministerial visits in the last few weeks – which was great for raising the profile of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 17th June 2021 @ 4pm. Location: Via MS Teams.

