**Stoke & Staffordshire LEP Mid-Year Conversation 2021-22**

*Instructions to Area Leads: please use this template to capture short notes and action points. A full minute of the meeting is not required.*

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| Location: SSLEP | Attendees: |
| Date: 11.10.21 | Anne Boyd (CEO)Alun Rogers (Chair)Simon Ablewhite (S151 Officer)Clare Hannah (BEIS)Annabel Townley (BEIS) |
| Time: 09:30 |

**2020-21 Annual Performance Review Actions**

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| **Action #** | **Action Point** | **Owner/status** | **Resolution** |
| 1 | LEP to continue to recruit 2 private sector vacancies, ensuring both gender and public/private ratios are met, as set out in National Assurance Framework. | SSLEP/Ongoing | Following the resignation of another private board member, there are now 3 board vacancies. 1 vacancy is being recruited with the other vacancies remaining until the future of LEP and its function is confirmed.  |
| 2 | City Deal Carbon Emissions Reduction Targets to be reported as part of regular reporting to SPMG. Data from the SEND project will be available from late spring 2021. Data from the DHN will not be available for another 18 months. | SSLEP Programme Manager/Ongoing | Commentary on the City Deal is now being reported to SMPG on a regular basis. |
| 3 | LEP to agree and implement a more rigorous project evaluation process. A briefing paper to go to SPMG in Q1, and implementation in Q.2 | Completed |  |
| 4 | Accountable body to share Assurance Audit Report when available. | Completed |  |

**Note of meeting**

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| **a) LEP Feedback and Core Funding**  |
| **LEP opening comments:*** Chair wished for minutes to reflect that the delay in announcing the future of LEPs has been reputationally damaging in the relationship with partners for both the LEP, and Government.
* Despite this, there remains a high degree of interest in supporting the LEP from businesses and that once the future is clearer, it should be straightforward in filling the remaining private board vacancies. Invitations for the LEP to engage with business have accelerated recently.
* Slide presented on ‘Our Approach’ (attached to minutes). CEO gave an overview of the work LEP has done since joining (6 months ago). Taking stock, agreeing a plan, resourcing, and delivering - resourcing is financial as well as people. The LEP has been working with its peers to contribute to wider economic goals for the area while also being realistic around its future.

**LEP Feedback & Core Funding*** BEIS acknowledged receipt of requested return with LEP information.
* Options for LEP to consider on funding:
* Funding received and new role, resource then ready to respond.
* Make prudent preparations should the need to wind down arise
* LEP is using the next 12 months to engage with business as intelligence is vital, as well as providing a ‘package’ to hand over.
* Staffing - 4.3 FTE in core team. Sam resigned (1FTE) Concerns in line with peers that any staff losses may result in a loss of confidence amongst partners.
* Need confirmation on LEP status before Christmas.
* Recruitment campaign for a dedicated Growth Hub lead is ready to go.
* CEO thanked BEIS staff for support.
* Gratitude expressed by CEO to S151 Officer for support.
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| **b) APR actions and follow ups** |
| As per Action table |
| **c) Governance**  |
| 1. **Annual report and delivery plan progress**

No issues1. **Compliance checks & actions taken**

Exception used around recruitment of new board members1. **Diversity statement and Board membership**

Currently at 40% female, but following a board member retiring in December it will sit at 33% - as the replacement in her role for the FE sector is male. However, out of private board membership, 55% are female. Future appointments will address this issue.1. **Any other governance issues**
* Administrative review of Local Assurance Framework - meeting with S151 and CEO in coming months to check if anything needs addressing.
* Skills and future workforce subgroup merger – reviewed achievements to date and ready to mobilise any wider agenda if tasked.
* Growth Hub – working on governance improvements. They are eager to work with the LEP, the new post will help to lead direction and improvements . CEO has attended national meetings and involved with Annual Review.
* Local Authority Scrutiny: 3/12/21 scrutiny meeting with CC, the agenda will be dictated by uncertainty of future of LEPs. Despite this continuing with BAU in governance and strategy
* Hatch review currently in progress will give the LEP an opportunity to improve and will inform on governance, operational leadership and reporting.
* The LEP has recently worked on and agreed a reserves policy, ensuring that they can make the best use out of this additional funding pot. There is a mixture of ringfenced and unallocated funding in the reserves.
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| **d) Delivery** |
| 1. **Getting Building Fund delivery and issues**

14 schemes – 12 contracted, 2 not contracted which is a risk, however mitigation is in place. COVID implications have slowed delivery and there is a potential for these to be unviable however the LEP is working with leaders to try and ensure delivery. £50k would be returned to reserves if they don’t go forward. There are other pipeline options but primarily working on making it happen. Confirmed the GBF spend will happen before end of March 22 using i54WE as a contingency if needed. 1. **Local Growth Fund closure and outstanding delivery**

33 Schemes in LGF,14 physically completed, 6 in progress. Risky project is Blythe Park as has complex issues, with a meeting later today with Highways on this. Stafford West access road is due to be open soon.1. **Progress on Delivery Plan**

Fulfilled. The only element that has slipped into October is the Insight commission (was intended to start September). Delays due to procurement process and decisions.**Objectives:****Governance:** continue to drive strategic change through evidenced-based, ambitious strategy underpinned by robust governance; a platform for future growth.**Operations:** continue to progress local projects and initiatives, demonstrating high-impact delivery of capital schemes and test-bed projects, whilst developing granular-level insight to support policy and investment decisions.**Stakeholder engagement:** building mutually-beneficial relationships at a local/regional/national level whilst amplifying the voice of business and the brand of our place.1. **COVID-19: impacts on delivery (where not covered above)**

COVID implications on cost of goods and materials has had an impact, plus fragility within supply chains impacting on some capital projects. Some workspace requirements changed to ensure covid-proof. CEO acknowledged S151 support in use of freedom & flexibilities.1. **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**
* City Deal - Keele project, renewable construction, smart energy demonstrators – work is progressing on these projects and outputs are being measured.
* Stoke District heat network – main spine around university completed by year end
* Changing the relationship has been really positive, using intelligence to improve networking
* Peer network has been slow, however need to tap into local business. The LEP projects that all networks will be completed as forecast.
* Proactive with HS2 team and supply chain. Meeting with Cheshire to discuss collaboration.
* Midlands Engine Steering Groups – CEO leading on Energy for West Midlands.

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| **c) Strategy**   |
|  **Strategic Impact - Recovery and Growth Strategy Planning update*** Launched in January, actively supporting partners in district & local councils.
* Continuing to progress priorities while also preparing to respond if changes to these are needed.
* Building on the LEP profile locally as requested by government, however now facing the challenge of managing the current situation of uncertainty and potential changing status.
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| **AOB**  |
| * Lack of certainty on future is an issue.
* Concern that LEP will be lost due to a lack of attention from government; individuals are likely to drift away if there is no clear place for them to impact what is happening locally.
* Chair wished to note support of accountable body and positive impact that CEO has made in 6 months in post.
* S151 officer wished to note that had a good relationship with LEP, no concerns around governance.
* Chair noted LEP in best shape it has ever been in.
* CEO wished to thank Area Team for support and shared intelligence.
* CH noted that regular conversations were useful and reassuring and to thank all for their hard work.
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**Action Points Arising** *(insert rows as required)*

| **Action #** | **Action Point** | **Owner** | **Date to be completed** | **Date completed** | **Resolution** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1  | BEIS/DLUHC to inform SSLEP on future of LEPs. | CLGU | Aspirational date of 31.12.21 (not in Area Team gift) |  |  |
| 2 | LEP to continue to recruit 2 private sector vacancies, ensuring both gender and public/private ratios are met, as set out in National Assurance Framework following confirmation from BEIS/DLUHC on future of LEPs. | SSLEP | Ongoing |  | Following the resignation of another private board member, there are now 3 board vacancies. 1 vacancy is being recruited with the other vacancies remaining until the future of LEP and its function is confirmed by CLGU |
| 3 | City Deal Carbon Emissions Reduction Targets to be reported as part of regular reporting to SPMG. Data from the SEND project will be available from late spring 2021. Data from the DHN will not be available for another 18 months. | SSLEP/Programme Manager | Ongoing |  | Commentary on the City Deal is now being reported to SMPG on a regular basis. Recommend that data is added to this report in an easy to read style to allow measurement against targets. |