

# Executive Board Meeting – Final Minutes & Actions Log

## 16 June 2022

In the Catalyst Building at Staffordshire University

<b>Board attendees:</b>		
<b>AR</b>	Alun Rogers (Chair)	Risual
<b>EC</b>	Emma Catterall	Camping & Caravanning Club
<b>MA</b>	Mohammed Ahmed	Ice Telecommunications
<b>MJ</b>	Prof. Martin Jones	Vice-Chancellor, University of Staffordshire
<b>TM</b>	Prof. Trevor McMillan	Vice-Chancellor, University of Keele
<b>ABr</b>	Cllr Abi Brown	Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
<b>ST</b>	Cllr Simon Tagg	Leader, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
<b>PW</b>	Cllr Philip White	Deputy Leader, Staffordshire County Council
<b>GA</b>	Cllr George Allen	Leader, East Staffs Borough Council
<b>SM</b>	Simon McEneny	Exec Director, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
<b>Operational:</b>		
<b>AB</b>	Anne Boyd	SSLEP Chief Executive
<b>SA</b>	Simon Ablewhite	SSLEP Accountable Body & Company Secretary
<b>In attendance/support</b>		
<b>RP</b>	Rebecca Parker	SSLEP Head of Business Growth Hub
<b>JR</b>	Jon Rouse	Exec Director, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
<b>DE</b>	Darryl Evers	Director (E,I&S), Staffordshire County Council
<b>KT</b>	Kirsten Trenell	Minutes
<b>Apologies:</b>		
<b>CB</b>	Caroline Brown	Caja Group
<b>JL</b>	James Leavesley (Vice Chair)	Leavesley Group
<b>HA</b>	Hannah Ault	Valentine Clays
<b>CH</b>	Clare Hannah	Area Lead, Cities and Local Growth Representative
<b>SW</b>	Sara Williams	Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce
<b>PF</b>	Cllr Patrick Farrington	Leader, Stafford Borough Council
<b>JO</b>	Cllr Jeremy Oates	Portfolio Holder Heritage & Growth, Tamworth Borough Council
<b>DP</b>	Cllr Doug Pullen	Leader, Lichfield District Council
<b>AW</b>	Cllr Alan White	Leader, Stafford County Council

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Item	Discussion	Action
1	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>AR welcomed everyone to the meeting. He advised the meeting is a single agenda item meeting to determine what the LEP direction is and to inform the creation of a new delivery plan.</p> <p>Introductions to the group were held and RP was welcomed in her attendance for this meeting as the new Head of Growth Hub.</p>	
2	<p><b>Apologies</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from CB, JL (joining Item 6 via call), HA, CH and SW.</p>	
3	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>None received</p>	
4	<p><b>Minutes from previous meeting/matters arising</b></p> <p>The minutes were confirmed as accurate and all actions complete.</p>	
5	<p><b>Chair's update &amp; Delegated Decisions</b></p> <p>AR advised many LEPs are determining their futures – WM Chairs are moving quickly on their different pathways. He advised Andy Street is due to provide a statement in July around integration of some LEPs.</p> <p>There is a LEP Network meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> June which will include DCMS, Innovation and DIT – AR will Chair some items at the event, and this will provide the opportunity for re-engagement.</p>	

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	<p>AR and PW have been part of the i54 launch, there have been some other launches held, including Smithfield Works with ABr and her team. He expressed excitement for the varying projects coming to fruition, with Shire Hall also due to complete and launch in July.</p> <p>AR also advised that conversations have been had around UK SPF and support had been provided around this.</p>	
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>Strategic developments – SSLEP evolution</b></p> <p>AR advised that AB has been working with LAs in relation to options and what the LEP future may look like. He advised AB would present an overview, with comment to be provided from DE and JR and then open discussion could begin.</p> <p>AB advised that as a Board, they had mandated that conversation start with LA colleagues to consider the LUWP, and to start to determine what the LEP would look like moving forward.</p> <p>AB has met with colleagues at SoTCC and SCC as T1 authorities to develop policy into a way forward, utilising guidance notes provided from central government. Important to note that there are many missing pieces of the jigsaw (eg delayed Enterprise Strategy), but sufficient information available to ‘frame’ the future picture. Note that said strategy is likely to be launched in the autumn as part of the autumn statement, with some potential budget attached and some connotations for LEPs and local government within it.</p> <p>AB expressed whilst there was not enough information to develop a detailed plan at this stage, she advised that there was sufficient guidance to develop a foundation framework to be built upon and that as information becomes available, it can be developed into this framework.</p> <p>AB expressed this is not a finished picture, but that this plan, to be submitted on 30<sup>th</sup> June, marks the start of the work ahead. The message conveyed from Board around how we are structured, and the ethos of ‘getting things done’ is reflected within the presentation. AB expressed she is looking for input and confirmation that Board agrees this way forward, so that the delivery plan can be developed from this and submitted to government on 30<sup>th</sup> June.</p>	

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<p>AB paid tribute to JH, JR, PC and DE for their time, support, and guidance during this already incredibly busy time for LA's and noted that meetings had taken place early morning and late evening, highlighting commitment from others to make time to collaborate. She praised the team effort and noted the value placed on the LEP and Board track record, energy and dynamism – she expressed the refocus to the team that this plan will provide will aid work being done and drive making the difference locally.</p> <p>AB talked about guiding principles and noted that we are looking at how shift from leading to influencing, be futureproof and align to democratically elected leadership structures whilst maintaining a strong business influence. Aim to create an agile vehicle to add value and make a difference, whilst working to create something meaningful and impactful that can operate alongside LA partners.</p> <p>The group have adopted a working title of a 'Local Business Partnership' – coming together of the business community to step up, to work alongside local government partners to influence and inform strategy going forward. This involves meaningful and facilitated engagement with a large number of businesses and sectors for it to be credible, and that it reflects the entire geography of the area and businesses within, to aid consultation and co-production of local strategy. AB expressed the importance of this engagement to enable to inform and influence strategy instead of directly driving it, and that sharing of ideas and concerns will allow the ambition do things bigger, bolder, and faster.</p> <p>AB spoke about direct delivery of services on behalf of 'the strategic collective', given the 10 LA's and the opportunity for the LEP to work across different areas and footprints, from GH, CEC, and with legacy programmes – most of which are funded, contractually obligated, and due to be completed by next year (with duty to report on outputs until 2025).</p> <p>As a testbed, the economic evidence base has been built over the past 12 months, involving SITREP, datasets, and stories behind the statistics, so that policy makers and strategists have a 'live' understanding of the business community needs and ambitions.</p> <p>Principles were designed to ensure inclusivity and accessibility, that it is not a membership body, but a vehicle that allows everyone to get involved to share views, insight and influence and feel heard. It will also allow for additional B2B work to lead innovation and can help solve potential challenges in the future.</p>	
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	<p>AB advised that transparency and effectiveness will continue to be important – ensuring we are delivering against KPIs and demonstrating accountability to Board and to democratically elected leaders. Future aim is broadly encapsulated as ‘ensuring that business needs, ideas and aspirations shape and influence economic growth locally’.</p> <p>AB expressed that the LEP would be a ‘voice around the table’ and responsible for collecting voices and views and ensuring that these are heard. AB advised she had spent some time in South Staffs yesterday and had tested the model with the businesses she had seen with businesses of varying size, structure, and sector – there appears to be excitement over the potential of the new offering, despite it being made clear that funding would not be part of this. The role embedded into policy is to shape and engage and add value. A positive response was received around mobilising business leaders to come together, potential for roundtables and groups to discuss challenges and opportunities for business, and to share good practice and lessons learnt to build resilience and inform future strategy and outcome. All involved in this process are confident this is a refocus and step up to what is being done presently and will be more impactful in areas we are developing.</p> <p>AB advised there are still important areas we need to think about, such as company structure, and highlighted these to the group. She advised the areas present a set of challenges but added that working through these challenges are helping to unite, give levels of accountability and to collaborate - and that clarity around remit will help determine structure and resource. It was expressed that a rebrand should be considered to reflect changes.</p> <p>In terms of business support, AB advised RP is undertaking work to look at services given the 50% reduction in funding and how we transform our existing services to maximise the investment we have, to create a vehicle that works for the future. Noted that we cannot continue to operate the current model given available resource.</p> <p>AB presented ideas on how the new business partnership could deliver value – to develop programme of roundtable discussions to ensure we know what business wants and needs, and so that LA partners can discuss evolving and emerging strategy as a result. AB advised it is important to define a business engagement strategy and economic insight plan so we can inform LA partners with the latest information when it is needed to inform future decision making. All of this is in line with the guidance notes from Government regarding LEP future role.</p> <p>An internationalisation strategy could provide an opportunity to road-test new working arrangements, it would be interesting to see what driving influence over direct accountability would look like and it would be an early</p>	
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<p>opportunity to bring change to life whilst developing something of value to the subregion (which could leverage future resources).</p> <p>It has been noted that BEIS are supportive of the approach and are impressed by levels of cooperation amongst LEP and Local Government, in defining a future vehicle that adds-value both nationally and locally. As pioneers progressing change at pace, we will inspire confidence within Government which will make us a highly investable place and enable us to be bolder and move faster by aligning priorities by mutual agreement. AB welcomed questions.</p> <p>DE advised the LA thought has been around the change in environment through government policy to add value to the aims of the LAs – the proposed is clear about how the business voice is shaped and would be positive for the area and how it will benefit businesses within Stoke &amp; Staffordshire.</p> <p>JR stressed that all both district and City councils are member-led and so in terms of political leadership, the proposed has been fed back in terms of policy to ensure it is in alignment. JR advised he has been in liaison with Cllr Brown in relation to the City perspective and that the co-design approach had been welcomed. He explained his involvement with LEPs since their conception, and that the trajectory of LEPs had changed from their original purpose within business development and growth and creation of a vibrant community and business voice, and the proposed allows that reset.</p> <p>PW added he is very supportive and congratulated AB/DE/PC on collaborative work - the way the paper has been produced allows for the principle nature of the partnership to remain the same, regardless of how the LA may change in future; the division of roles and functions is sensible, hard to criticise, and it will be good to make headway in this regard. PW recognised that further work needed to be done to deliver the detail, and that this set a strong foundation and principle to build upon.</p> <p>ABr concurred with the ongoing discussion, she noted she is happy with what has come forward and the approach is constructive.</p> <p>AR’s personal perspective from a business view, is that value being added is of the most importance, whilst providing an authentic and unique voice. There is opportunity to have conversations and provide a two-way dialogue for businesses and create real value from conversations, whilst crating the most impact for positive change</p>	
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	<p>– it was noted that a ‘talking shop’ is not what Board is to become and the need is for it to contribute and be part of the conversation to ultimately influence change. If Board is to add value in its function moving forward, then the plan for the LEP needs to be interesting enough that businesses will want to engage with.</p> <p>JL echoed AR’s statement in that the function needs to be valuable to private businesses - there is a clear difference between LA’s and business owners’ goals and objectives and there has been some separation in terms of political leaders speaking the language of business. JL explained that the SSLEP Board as a group have learnt to speak each other’s language, and that within SSLEP we have created openness, cooperation, and willingness to work together - it would be disappointing to see that being lost. JL supported the approach presented.</p> <p>MJ expressed support for the approach and thanked AB for the comprehensive paper/presentation. He noted that this is this an opportunity to enhance governance, build structure and the geography around the impending Enterprise Strategy and maximise a function and mechanism for potential to pre-empt and bid for any additional funding or government investment that could be received by the area in future.</p> <p>AR advised we have opportunity to make some mistakes during reform, but also emerge as leader nationally. It is felt needed to take the risk to emerge rather than wait for the change and be told how to move. Through LUWP, we are in a unique position and so we could leverage this and raise our profile in all areas.</p> <p>ST advised he was in support, and echoed that from a district perspective, seeing Staffordshire LAs working together with local businesses is positive – as an original Board member who has seen the change to the voice of business over the years, he noted it was good to see this evolve with pace and evolution for the future, especially in terms of ensuring a business voice during potential devolution.</p> <p>AR added that SSLEP are proactive in maintaining good working relationships and that is what sets us apart from other areas and combined authorities.</p> <p>TM asked if a voice of business is what was wanted, given what is being done already and asked if LAs would fund this – it was also asked if the Chamber could potentially carry out this work. He also queried where legacy work would sit.</p>	
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<p>AR reinforced that, whilst there are a number of great business networks and membership organisations, this vehicle would not be based on membership and would have an entire focus on amplifying the voice of all business to influence change locally. He did not envisage it as a vehicle that would lobby, but rather constructively influence policy, strategy and economic services locally</p> <p>DE advised that this approach has not been taken before and that a proactive business voice could be used as a catalyst to shape collective ambition. In terms of financial support, SCC have provided resource and staff to continue to add value, but now the investment will be towards the ‘new world’ LEP and its priorities.</p> <p>JR added that through LUWP, SoTCC have taken this opportunity to utilise allocations with districts and to work to develop new frameworks – future vision would only be achievable through collaboration, including business leadership; he added the LEP vehicle for that is needed.</p> <p>EC added that whilst the paper is strong, it presents challenges in terms of meaningful engagement and that future work will need to be completed to determine this, as business leaders will go where they can add the most value and so how we attract a truly representative business voice needs to be considered fully.</p> <p>JR added that legacy programmes could not sit within the county as the mechanism is not in place and has jurisdiction in this regard so accountability would need to be split – the Chamber could not deliver this as it is a membership organisation and has a limited membership, whereas the LEP in its form is representative of ALL business. He added the Chamber will still lead LSIP and do important work but cannot take on the function and form of the LEP.</p> <p>AB advised that for some businesses, accountability is not sought, but an ability to influence change is. The new vehicle can add value in multiple ways as it is about how we support each other and can connect conversations and join dots. She further advised that having tested what the voice of business might mean in a limited capacity – to include focussed growth of businesses of different sizes and scale, it is felt businesses will want to positively engage with the new approach. The voice of business is about giving space to speak and be heard to influence, without a host of direct accountabilities.</p> <p>MJ expressed some concern about legacy programmes, given need to report. AB advised the Change Manager role involves identifying strategic programmes and support around workforce, energy, supply and they will continue to</p>	
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	<p>report legacy, and support projects and emerging programmes going forward. SA agreed monitoring of legacy would be classed as a separate workstream – given the frequency and content, review of legacy programmes could be done in a separate meeting if necessary.</p> <p>AR advised review of programme information could be delivered in a way so that it is dynamic and fun if built into Board</p> <p>ABr agreed that it is paramount to develop a solid construct and that as there is opportunity to redesign something attractive for both political and business leaders, we can engage, create opportunities, and move forward in the right way. She added she is committed to making this a success.</p> <p>PW emphasised that this is really good partnership, and the proposition that has been co designed by the LA, LEP and County establishes and adds value in the new structure, whilst meeting government policy. The original intention of a LEP was not that that they delivered funding and so the plan reflects coming full circle in what LEPs want to do and achieve, by reverting to conveying the voice of business. In terms of activity, he highlighted that the development of the C&amp;E bid, investigating and continuing to recruit good representation of organisations, and how the LEP will be relevant for business success will be prioritised as part of their work going forward.</p> <p>AR added in terms of skills, value will be added with the voice of business – he noted finance is what people have been interested in, however engaging with businesses where innovative plans have already been a success and engaging them with others to drive away from legacy and archaic thinking will help to develop this.</p> <p>SM asked how the LEP history and potential change in narrative would work alongside the existing and new deliverables. He asked if businesses would expect funding as part of being involved with the LEP.          AB provided assurance that messaging regarding funding would be clear (ie the LEP is no longer an investor and in fact is likely to be bidding for funds going forward)</p> <p>AR advised that given the changes to the LEP, it has been unfair to bring new people in to join the Board – he can now look to sell the new vision and deliver its value to businesses owners that have approached him previously. He added the LEP will look to recruit Board members that will genuinely want to add value and deliver the objectives of the new function and provide a conduit to the voice of business.</p>	
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	<p>AB noted that there was an appetite for open and clear conversation, not about funding, but about being heard, influencing change, and how we can solve challenges locally. The response was good, and businesses seem to be receptive to new and innovative ways of working, and of meaningful engagement – she emphasised we are not just speaking to but listening to businesses to help build relationships.</p> <p>PW added we could sit still and let government decide or we can interpret and create our best version of their vision, take that to market and adapt it if needed. The proposed plan is fit for purpose, so if all agree to work together, then plans can be built off the back of that – starting with engagement strategy, marketing strategy and recruitment to Board vacancies.</p> <p>DE noted that Board should be excited to develop the future, but mindful of the fact that the Board is not themselves the voice of business, but the conduit to, the collector of voices to then influence change and help determine where are the priorities are locally.</p> <p>AR asked the group if they would like to remain to discuss details or if they were happy for AB to work with DE/PC to create a proposed delivery plan in line with the presentation and discussion, noting deadline for submission on 30<sup>th</sup>.</p> <p>AB advised she would continue to co-design with colleagues the work on the proposed delivery plan in the meantime and noted that working groups would be created to discuss detail including funding, governance etc further down the line, as this level of detail would not need to be agreed prior to the delivery plan submission on 30<sup>th</sup>. The key principles set out in the proposed will inform work programmes that will follow and evidence to government core deliverables against milestones.</p> <p>Board thanked AP/AB for a productive meeting, agreeing that the pace of progression would set us in good stead nationally.</p> <p>Board members <b>AGREED</b> that AB would lead on writing the delivery plan for submission and would feedback views electronically before submission on 30<sup>th</sup>, and that timeframes against plans for delivery will also be added. AR would formally approve submission on behalf of Board.</p>	<p>Further planning discussions to be scheduled and held to determine strategy</p> <p>Next stage of Delivery Plan to be written and circulated to Board electronically in advance of 30<sup>th</sup> June</p>
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7	<p><b>SPMG/Delegated Authority Subgroup update</b></p> <p><i>Deferred as no meeting held</i></p>	
8	<p><b>A&amp;F Committee: update</b></p> <p><i>Deferred as no meeting held</i></p>	
9	<p><b>Forward Plan</b></p> <p>AR noted that this would be reviewed further to the new delivery plan being determined.</p>	<p>Review of Forward Plan to be conducted</p>
10	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>ABr advised that tomorrow they would host the Levelling Up minister and announce that SoT are the first LA in the country to sign a partnership with Homes England to continue to bring quality homes and accommodation to the area.</p> <p>It was requested that post LEP chairs conference, information would be fed back – and the detailed delivery plan would reflect what was being asked of following this event.</p>	<p>Feedback on LEP Network event to be delivered after 27<sup>th</sup> June</p>

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### ACTIONS LOG

Item	Action	Lead
6	Next stage of Delivery Plan to be written and circulated to Board electronically in advance of 30 <sup>th</sup> June	AB
6	Further planning discussions to be scheduled and held to determine strategy	ALL
9	Review of Forward Plan to be conducted	ALL
10	Feedback on LEP Network event to be delivered after 27 <sup>th</sup> June	AR/AB

**Next Meeting:** Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> July, 4-6pm

Location TBC