

**LEP Company Executive Board Meeting
via MS Teams conference call
Thursday 17th November 2022
Final Minutes**

Board Directors

Alun Rogers (Chair)	risual
Mohammed Ahmed	Ice Telecommunications
Emma Catterall	Camping & Caravanning Club
Prof. Martin Jones	Vice-Chancellor, University of Staffordshire
James Leavesley (Vice Chair)	Leavesley Group
Prof. Trevor McMillan	Vice-Chancellor, University of Keele
Sara Williams	Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce
Cllr Abi Brown	Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Cllr Alan White	Leader, Stafford County Council

Advisory/Operational Team

Andy Devaney	Interim SSLEP CEO
Jo Kemp	SSLEP Business Engagement Officer
Simon Ablewhite	SSLEP Accountable Body

In Attendance

Mark Connell	Strategic and Partnerships Manager, Stoke-On-Trent City Council
Clare Hannah	Area Lead, Cities and Local Growth Representative

Apologies

Hannah Ault	Valentine Clays
Caroline Brown	Caja Group
Cllr Simon Tagg	Leader, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Cllr Paul Roberts	Leader, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council

1. Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone.
SA declared the meeting quorate.

2. Apologies

These were noted, as above.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Notes of the previous meeting and matters arising Actions

- JK to provide list of all groups in which LEP staff are involved to Board. This is a w.i.p.
- AR & SW to get together re: international trade.

5. Chair's Update and Delegated Decisions

- Andy Devaney is now onboard, from Cheshire & Warrington LEP
- Midlands Connect governance matter. Sir John Peace is stepping down as Chair, so a process to appoint a new Chair & VC is in hand. This is decided by LEP Chairs. Meeting due in Jan. please advise AR if you have any suggestions.
- Talking to the usual CEO's & Leaders around the region.

6. Roundtable of introductions to interim CEO from Board.

AR introduced AD who then provided background around his Cheshire & Warrington LEP experience – currently work as Director of Business innovation there. Previously worked in various LA's & a university, so understand policy, delivery & strategy around these type of organisations.

This is week 3 of his 2 days p/w with SSLEP & he has had an encouraging start thanks to the team, AR & SA. A huge amount of positive work has been started already which can now be built on & developed. Spoken with some Board members & working on getting round to all over the next few weeks. Please liaise with Kirsten Trenell for his diary access, or feel free to get in touch directly.

Cllr Abi Brown, Emma Catterall, James Leavesley (VC), Martin Jones, Mo Ahmed, Sara Williams, Trevor McMillan & Cllr Alan White introduced themselves to AD & welcomed him.

7. CEO's introduction & update

AD advised that it was too early to get into much detail about the LEP transition & updates around the various working groups. The team should be busy through December & January then we will have more to present by January (first Board meeting of 2023 should be February, but a January one could be possible).

8. SAP 'Skills for Growth' survey: update/overview.

Due to a technical issue with the MS Teams invite reaching him & then him being unavailable due to childcare commitments, Kevin Fenning was not present as planned. JK conveys apologies to the Board for this confusion.

MJ therefore obtained the survey result documents from KF & sent to JK for onward forwarding to Board. Completed 21/11/22.

9. Local Skills Improvement Partnership (LSIP)

SW updated the Board now that the LSIP contract has been awarded & the first LSIP Board meeting has been held.

The purpose is to reform Further Education, apprenticeships, Higher Education, vocational & workplace training.

Priorities are sector led & actionable priorities are due by May of next year.

Year 1 will focus on improved activity, with years 2 & 3 for monitoring.

Chambers of Commerce have won the contracts in 32/38 areas nationwide, so our LSIP can be hyper-local, but also, via Chambers liaison, reflection on areas not covered by specific regions can be made.

There is a very full programme to work with networking organisations, business groups.

Please spread the word as Chambers are trying to get out to all willing parties.

There is an app, developed by East Midlands Chambers, which issues one question per week to businesses, with a live results dashboard, plus a regular survey. This will be utilised.

The LSIP Board will comprise of representatives from the Chamber, LA's, universities, FE, independent training provider, micro businesses, SMEs & large business.

They will provide direction & support delivery, represent the interest of stakeholders, ensure the LSIP meets the funding requirements & sign off the final plan/actionable priorities.

Two sub-groups will then sit under the LSIP Board:-

1. Employers Group

30-40 businesses of all sizes/areas of the County will be targeted to be a part of the group. They will act as a sounding board for the views of business, to test thinking & actional priorities.

2. Providers Group

Utilising the existing SPES network of over 40 FE/HE/Independent providers. They will be the voice of the providers, testing potential skills ideas, changes & support the development of actions.

MJ was at Board meeting recently & added that skills needs/demands now might not be what is needed in the future. Businesses want specific skills now, but we are trying to the map forward plan for future productivity too.

Stoke-on-Trent has special focus as a place due to specific issues within the region.

SW added that the skills eco-structure means that both sides need to understand each other. At present progression levels have big gaps; Level 3 – 4 are achievable, we might be missing level 5, but have level 6, so employers are frustrated.

We have SPES (Staffordshire Partnership for Employment & Skills) locally, so conversations are being held with them.

The Stoke centric group will be developed, with the hope that methodology (particularly with the app) provides granular information, with Stoke having its own set of metrics.

The Chambers have just employed an Employer Engagement Provider (Anne Jones - anne.jones@staffordshirechambers.co.uk) on a temporary contract.

TMc expressed concern about engaging with learners only in passing, since they are central to this as the future workforce. We should look to help them prepare for all jobs through their lives not just their first one. The work environment over the next 30-40 years will be a challenge, as seen in Stoke-on-Trent over past 50 years, industries can die off & then there is nowhere for the workforce to go.

SW re-iterated that the task was to do this from an employers' perspective. A more engaged & fluid way for providers & learners to engage with each other is required. 1000's in work are under skilled, yet businesses do not necessarily do anything about this. They are hearing lots of frustrations & that is just from those business which are engaged.

The CEC are joining too, to survey parents & teachers, thus working to cover as many bases as possible.

MJ added that consideration of how the LSIP Board pulls all this together is key, then how it presents itself. This is a good opportunity.

AR stated that from the last ONS survey about productivity managers are skilled but don't necessarily push training/CPD to employees. There is not currently enough skills development.

10. SSLEP Delivery Plan: updates

AD – overview already provided as above at item 7.

11. SPMG; update

JL advised that there had been no SPMG meeting this month.

All projects are on track, but there are 2 projects which are moving towards a red risk.

- XXXXX - Staffordshire Moorlands DC have refused planning permission for a roundabout not traffic lights. The occupier on this current 20-acre site is still there, so the site will roll forward with good occupation & a housebuilding need.
- XXXXX – the bridge is still needed. The developers have not yet signed legal documents with D2N2. We are told that the start date is scheduled for January 2023, but these documents must be signed. Therefore, JL is to attend an arranged meeting where he must suggest that the money is moved elsewhere. Hopefully there will be positive progress in the next few weeks.

12. A&F Committee: update

MA advised that there had been no A&F meeting this month.

From a Risk perspective the only issue is Drakelow, as discussed by JL.

13. Forward Plan

ESIF & Transition delivery plan to be brought to December's meeting.

ESIF – JULY (AB request)
LEP Delivery & Transition plans
Staffordshire County Deal collaboration
Strategic priorities: Midlands Engine and Midlands Connect (SW request)
An International Trade strategy for Staffordshire (DIT) (SW request)
Local transformation: programme updates: District Heat Network, FHSF, Town Deals etc
E&D update

14. AOB

Meeting ended @ 16:50 hours

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 15th December 2022 @ 4pm, via MS Teams online.