

Grand Challenge 1

Green economy and carbon reduction in the commercial sector

SSLEP Executive Board is asked to consider, comment and vote on the following option:

- Agree the broad objectives of the first challenge
- Provide strategic input and guidance to the Executive
- Consider short and long term deliverables for the challenge

Report Author: A Devaney, Interim CEO

13th February 2023

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The board has previously agreed that moving into the new financial year 2023/24 they would agree 3 'Grand Challenges' that would form the core of the LEP delivery plan for the year. This paper sets out detail of the first challenge which has been developed in collaboration with the LEP, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council with further input from the districts.

2. Background

2.1 Climate reduction targets will present both challenges and opportunities to all businesses in the future, whilst recent energy price rises have only expediated many of these issues. The need to move towards a Net Zero future always meant that many businesses would need to change how they operate to be more energy efficient, move towards the use of renewable energy sources, and adapt to survive and thrive.

2.2 This challenge aims to understand what our local business community believes are the opportunities and threats presented by the need to meet climate reduction targets and what local government and partners can do to support businesses in the move towards greener ways of operating.

2.3 There has been a great deal of work carried out by partners, therefore significant partnership will be undertaken to ensure duplication is avoided and a collaborative approach.

3. Recommendations

3.1 The board take the recommendations of the LEP and Local Authorities and confirm 'Green economy and carbon reduction in the commercial sector' as the first of the 3 Grand Challenges.

3.2 Consider the following objectives and provide input and advice to the LEP Executive to develop a fully realised delivery plan:

4. Objectives

4.1 To understand what businesses believe are the main opportunities and threats of the green agenda in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, including (but not exclusively):

The need to retrofit commercial and residential premises.

The increased prevalence of electric vehicles and associated infrastructure requirements.

New and innovative technologies such as hydrogen.

4.2 To consider if and how local businesses are:

Planning for the need to reduce their carbon emissions to meet targets and what this may mean for longer-term business viability.

Considering the need to diversify business operations to survive.

Considering any opportunities presented by carbon reduction targets to enter new business markets.

Developing their workforce to ensure that it has the green skills needed to reduce carbon emissions.

4.3 To understand what businesses believe will be required from local government and partner organisations to address any issues and take advantage of any opportunities presented by the need to meet future climate reduction targets, including (but not exclusively):

Business support.

Green skills and training provision.

Provision of appropriate premises and infrastructure.

Signposting and/or supporting access to businesses and institutions involved in providing green solutions and/or advice.

5. Next Steps

5.1 With strategic input and guidance from the board the LEP to develop a fully workplan that sets out how the objectives set out above will be delivered, including how a representative sample of businesses across all sectors, localities (e.g. rural/urban, and Districts/Boroughs/Cities) ranging in size from micro to multi national will be identified and engaged, including assurance that where good engagement already exists these mechanisms will be utilised rather than duplicated.

5.2 Workplan to include budget requirements and set out any individuals programmes and projects that will be delivered as part of the wider brief. This could potentially utilise GPF funds where required.

5.3 LEP board to work in partnership with Staffordshire Leaders Board and Stoke-On-Trent City Council to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the programmes.

