

**LEP Company Executive Board Meeting  
via MS Teams conference call  
Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2023  
Final Minutes**

**Board Directors**

Alun Rogers (Chair)	risual
Mohammed Ahmed	Ice Telecommunications
Prof. Martin Jones	Vice-Chancellor, University of Staffordshire
James Leavesley (Vice Chair)	Leavesley Group
Prof. Trevor McMillan	Vice-Chancellor, University of Keele
Cllr Abi Brown	Leader, Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Cllr Mike Sutherland	Cannock Chase District Council
Cllr Simon Tagg	Leader, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Cllr Philip White	Deputy Leader, Staffordshire County Council

**Advisory/Operational Team**

Andy Devaney	Interim SSLEP CEO
Jo Kemp	SSLEP Business Engagement Officer
Alan Shakespeare	SSLEP Accountable Body
Kit Hannah	Area Lead, Cities and Local Growth Representative

**In Attendance**

Martin Hamilton	CEO, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Mark Connell	Strategic and Partnerships Manager, Stoke-On-Trent City Council

**Apologies**

Emma Catterall	The Belfry
Sara Williams	Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce
Cllr Alan White	Leader, Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Doug Pullen	Leader, Lichfield District Council
Simon Ablewhite	SSLEP Accountable Body

**1. Introductions**

AR welcomed all to the meeting.

The meeting was declared not quorate by AR & AS

## 2. Apologies

These were noted, as above.

## 3. Declarations of Interest

Under Item 8 SPMG:

- Trevor McMillan re: IC7
- Cllr Philip White re: Chatterley Valley

## 4. Notes of the previous meeting and matters arising

Accepted.

## 5. Chair's Update and Delegated Decisions

This formed the substantive part of the meeting, due to the Spring Budget the previous day & further to the e-mailed letter from Minister Rowley issued to Board that morning.

- Government has now indicated the future for LEPs with the suggestion of funding being withdrawn from April 2024.
- A policy update is expected by summer, but may take longer from experience.
- There will be LEP Network Chairs & CEO calls tomorrow, so more details will follow. We have no answers at present.

**KH** added that in terms of consultation, this will cover impact & ask what LEPs intend to do IF this goes ahead. LEPs are on different pathways, so proper understanding from all 38 LEPs is needed if government goes ahead with this mandated decision. This must happen quickly as the amount of uncertainty has gone on for some time.

The following extract was also added onto the online chat:-

*From the full text of the Budget: "The government is committed to empowering democratically elected local leaders at every opportunity. To this end, the government intends for the functions of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to be delivered by local government in the future. Therefore, the government is minded to withdraw central government support for LEPs from April 2024. DLUHC and the Department for Business and Trade will now consult on these proposals, before confirming a decision. The government will publish an updated policy position to confirm next steps by the summer."*

**AD** stated that the text has been clear. However, government have **not** taken away responsibility or work, just the funding arm.

What happens next is as yet unclear but is a big issue for LA's to understand.

We do have LEP & GH budgets & a mandate so we cannot forget this. This LEP will continue BAU for now. There seems little value in speculating much currently.

**AR** added that what Board needs to do at present is pause & re-appraise SSLEP.

**MJ** stated that whilst he did not want to speculate, he is keen to understand whether it will be upper or lower tier LA's who will take over responsibility,

Will it follow the way of UKSPF funding? What might it mean for the current relationships between the LEP & other bodies e.g. SAP & other sub-bodies?

Clarity over what gets mainstreamed, or not, under LA's, the use of reserves & who picks up on these is all needed.

The English devolution framework seems to apply to combined mayoral authorities, but in future will it count for non-combined ones outside of the larger cities?

(TMC having conveyed his potential apologies arrived 16:11)

**AD** agreed with MJ - The decisions planned for Board today could be unpicked tomorrow, so these may now need reconsideration, regardless of government consultation. Board members are likely to receive contact from him over the next few weeks.

**Cllr PW** acknowledged the sensible comments thus far, but added the need to be mindful of how we move forward if there is no future source of revenue.

Work is required on options & consideration given to what is important for Staffordshire.

We are using public money, so can fund activities, but it doesn't necessarily mean that we should.

As Board members we must ensure delivering things which inspire confidence in our taxpayers.

**AR** confirmed that AD & he will come back to Board once more is known to then work through whatever is proposed. There are implications for staff too, so care is needed.

There were other important agenda items which still need discussion though, despite this news.

## **6. CEO's updates:**

**AD** confirmed that;

- LEP & GH budgets still need agreeing over the next few weeks.
- GH's have received their letter of comfort now & further consideration may be needed around where we take the GH.
- Progress has been made with Grand Challenges under one of the three subjects.
- GPF & its investment needs deciding.
- Drakelow reallocated funds need addressing, which JL will cover under Item 8.

## **7. Grand Challenges**

Not covered

## **8. SPMG**

The pre-board paper 'Business Case Outcomes' was shown onscreen & an overview provided by JL.

- TMC & Cllr PW offered to drop off the call due to conflicts, but JL pointed out that decisions have been made by SPMG, having delegated decision responsibility, so this not necessary.
- Hatch reviewed all proposed schemes, as in independent body
- It had been good to see that schemes suggested were not all public sector ones.
- There had been some really well written submissions to consider.

- Travel scheme – a controversial one for the assessors, but it ticked all boxes & is match funded well.
- Chatterley West & Wombourne - there were funds remaining after the top scoring three, so there had been a good SPMG debate about how funds would be split.
- All these selected schemes fit the criteria of timescale for the original GBF grants.

The Board were asked to ratify these decisions & then legal documents can be rapidly exchanged. **AD** advised that a Legal Officer at Staffordshire CC has been allocated.

**AR** invited comments & questions. None were forthcoming, therefore these were accepted as ratified.

**JL** thanked the team for their very diligent work done, SPMG members were also thanked for attending meetings at short notice.

**AR** gave **AD** the opportunity to advise whether any other agenda items were essential tonight & it was confirmed that what had been covered at the outset of the meeting sufficed. It was re-iterated that Board need to have a structured conversation once more is understood.

#### **9. A&F Committee: update**

Not covered

#### **10. CVEZ SIP**

Not covered

#### **11. Future Priorities**

Not covered

#### **12. AOB**

**Cllr AB** celebrated that;

- Stoke-no-Trent City Council now has a formal partnership with Homes England for 3000 new homes in the city.
- The Home Office will have a permanent location & new building in the city centre.
- Stoke-no-Trent City Council has a strong relationship with government under the Levelling up agenda/Levelling Up Partnerships (LUPs). They are one of twenty cities who have been invited to join the LUPs.
- She met with Michael Gove yesterday.

**JL** conveyed thanks for **SA**'s brilliant work with the LEP, asking this to be minuted. He welcomed Alan Shakespeare to these meetings in the interim. This was reiterated by **AR**, who stated that **SA** had been instrumental over the last few years in keeping this LEP in shape with governance & support.

**Cllr MS** wished the LEP Chair, CEO & other senior management good luck for forthcoming plans & gave a 'well done' to **Cllr AB** for her wins.

**Cllr ST** advised that Future High Streets & Town Deal wins are now decisively moving towards spend in Newcastle-Under-Lyme town centre, on Ryecroft & York Place.

**Cllr PW** celebrated £30m allocated for highways schemes across the county.

Meeting ended @ 16:31.

**Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023 @ 4pm, via MS Teams online.**

<b>Future Priorities</b>
LEP Delivery & Transition plans - ongoing/further
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