

Minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 6 January 2022

Present: Colin Greatorex (Chairman)

Attendance

Tina Clements	Bob Spencer
Mike Davies	Samantha Thompson
Jeremy Oates	Conor Wileman (Vice-Chairman (Overview))
Kath Perry, MBE	

Also in attendance: Stephen Funnell (Stoke-on-Trent City Council); Simon Goodall (Tamworth Borough Council) and; Shelagh McKiernan (Tamworth Borough Council)

Apologies: Charlotte Atkins, Gill Heath, Jeremy Pert and Bernard Peters

PART ONE

29. Declarations of Interest

County Councillor Jeremy Oates declared an interest in Item No. 3 on the Agenda, "Scrutiny Review of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership" owing to his Membership of the Partnership's Executive Board as Leader of Tamworth Borough Council and their former Portfolio Holder for Heritage & Growth. Cllr Oates left the meeting room and took no part in the discussion and Resolutions set out in minute No. 30 below.

30. Scrutiny Review of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership 2020-21

The Committee considered a report and PowerPoint presentation of the Chair, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) regarding the operation and performance of the Partnership during 2020/21 (schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

The meeting was attended by Alun Rodgers, Chair, SSLEP and Anne Boyd, Chief Executive, SSLEP.

SSLEP was formed in 2011 to bring principal Local Authorities, businesses and other stakeholders together with the aim of driving economic growth and prosperity within the County (including Stoke-on-Trent). Following incorporation as a company limited by guarantee in April 2019, SSLEP Board became their main decision-making body. The Board currently comprised 18 Directors, 10 of whom were from the private sector and 6 from the public sector.

SSLEPs were required to agree and publish an Assurance Framework setting out their governance arrangements, in line with Central Government's National Local Growth Assurance Framework. The National Framework stated that LEPs should participate in relevant Local Authority scrutiny arrangements to guarantee the effective and appropriate democratic scrutiny of their investment decisions. Furthermore, SSLEP's Assurance Framework provided that scrutiny should be undertaken annually via joint arrangements between relevant Local Authorities in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

During his presentation of the report the Chair highlighted: - (i) the purpose of their attendance at the meeting; (ii) the function of SSLEP; (iii) the composition of SSLEP's Board; (iv) SSLEP's Strategy; (v) Central Government's anticipated review of LEPs nationwide during 2022; (vi) SSLEP's governance structures; (vii) SSLEP's Delivery Plan for 2020/21; (viii) SSLEP's programme management of current initiatives such as Local Growth Deal and Getting Building Fund etc and; (ix) the recommendations contained in the report having regard to the above-mentioned Assurance Framework.

During the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave detailed scrutiny to the work of SSLEP, asking questions and seeking clarification of various matters including: - (i) the background to Central Government's review of LEPs and likely outcomes for Staffordshire; (ii) initiatives aimed specifically at promoting skills and young people; (iii) the focus of SSLEPs work having regard to the diversity of Staffordshire's economy and business sector; (iv) the involvement of SSLEP in Central Government's Levelling-up Agenda; (v) the inward investment levered by SSLEP during 2020/21 and; (vi) benchmarking of performance of SSLEP with other LEPs in the West Midlands Region and beyond.

In addition, the Chairman invited the representatives of Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire District and Borough Councils present to ask questions of the Chair and Chief Executive, SSLEP, as they related specifically to their local areas.

The Chairman then thanked the representatives of SSLEP for an interesting and informative presentation and looked forward to continued partnership working with all stakeholders in the promotion of economic growth and prosperity in the County for the benefit of residents.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received and noted.

(b) That the good performance of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership in delivering their objectives during 2020/21 be welcomed.

(c) That the uncertainty regarding the future of Local Enterprise Partnerships, nationally, be noted and that future developments relating to Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, in this respect, be monitored closely.

(d) That the future delivery of economic growth and prosperity in Staffordshire through partnership working arrangements continue to be scrutinised, as appropriate.

Chairman