

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Monday 26 February 2024

Joint Enterprise Delivery Committee

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Considers and comments on the approach to form a Joint Enterprise Delivery Committee with Stoke-on-Trent City Council ("Joint Committee").
- b. Considers and comments upon the draft Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee.
- c. Notes that ahead of the Joint Committee being established and once the reserves of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) are formally transferred to the County Council as the accountable body, it is being recommended that Cabinet agrees to the immediate ring-fencing of funding for the Growth Hub, Careers Hub and Local Visitor Economy Partnership as key economic programmes for the local area.
- d. Notes that the Cabinet decisions referred to in recommendation C will be considered by the Prosperous Overview & Scrutiny Committee through the 6-monthly Economic Strategy Delivery Update, as the committee responsible for such matters.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Leader of the Council

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. The imminent closure of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) and integration of its responsibilities into the upper tier authorities has created a need to consider how these functions are managed and decisions made across the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent geography. At its meeting in March 2024, it is being recommended that Cabinet agrees to the establishment of a Joint

Committee for this purpose. This report sets out the key points for consideration to create a new Joint Committee for Staffordshire County Council (SCC) and Stoke-on-Trent City Council (SoTCC) to take all decisions, within existing budget and policy frameworks, arising from the winding down and cessation of the SSLEP. Recommended Terms of Reference for establishment and operation of the Joint Committee are appended to this report and contain further detail.

2. This is therefore an opportunity for the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment upon the issues related to the establishment of the Joint Committee prior to this being considered by Cabinet. It should also be noted that it will also be recommended that Cabinet agree to ring-fence funding that will be transferred to the County Council from the SSLEP in advance of the Joint Committee being established. This funding is for three key economic growth programmes that form part of the delivery of our Economic Strategy, and therefore this decision will be considered by the Prosperous Overview & Scrutiny Committee through the standing 6-monthly Economic Strategy Delivery Update as the committee responsible for such matters.

Report

Background

3. For the last decade, the Stoke-on-Trent, and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) has acted as an important organisational means of bringing together businesses and local leaders to drive economic growth across the area. It has also been responsible for the management and delivery of several major funding streams from central government. In March 2022 we received guidance that following the review of LEPs, most of their responsibilities would transfer to local and combined authorities, with the primary role for LEPs in the future being to provide the voice of business for their respective areas. However, at Spring Budget 2023, the Chancellor stated that the Government was 'minded to' end the national funding of LEPs from 1st April 2024 and this decision was confirmed on 4th August 2023. Over recent months work has been progressing on the integration of the functions of the SSLEP to the upper tier local authorities, in-line with Government guidance.
4. The SSLEP has already agreed in principle to the closure of the company and in its absence the governance for making decisions related to the LEP responsibilities to be integrated within the local authorities has had to be considered. It is being recommended that a Joint Committee is established which can make decisions on these responsibilities that are to be delivered across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, based upon SCC's and SoTCC's existing shared services (e.g. Archives and Coroners).

5. The draft Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee, which Cabinet will be recommended to agree, set out the intention for two members of each council to be appointed to the Joint Committee, with one member of each council needing to be present for any decision to be quorate. It is recommended that the Leader of the Council and Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills are appointed given their remit as directors of the SSLEP and the responsibilities of the Joint Committee. Further details on the responsibilities and operation of the Joint Committee are set out within the draft Terms of Reference for consideration by the Committee.

Link to Strategic Plan

6. The responsibilities of the Joint Committee primarily relate to the Strategic Plan priority to support Staffordshire's economy to grow, generating more and better paid jobs.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

7. The Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee has been responsible for scrutiny of the SSLEP since its inception, with the Committee last considering this in January 2023.

Community Impact

8. The Joint Committee itself is not considered to have any direct impact on any specific communities within Staffordshire. The programmes that the Joint Committee will oversee and have decision making responsibility for will likely have impacts, particularly related to the local economy, and these will be considered through the appropriate governance processes and delivery of each programme.
9. Advice has been received from external advisers Bevan Brittan in respect of the legal implications of matters arising under the Agreement and that the work is ongoing to conclude matters in accordance with their advice.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Draft Joint Enterprise Delivery Committee Terms of Reference

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