

Report of:	Chief Executive and the Head of Planning and Regeneration
Contact Officer:	Bob Phillips
Telephone No:	01543 464430
Portfolio Leader:	Leader of the Council; and Economic Development & Planning Leader
Key Decision:	Yes
Report Track:	Cabinet: 30/01/14

CABINET
30 JANUARY 2014
SOUTHERN STAFFORDSHIRE PARTNERSHIP

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To review the Council's decision to withdraw from membership of the Southern Staffordshire Partnership (to comply with the requirements of the Council's Budget 2013-14); and to consider continuing the Council's membership for 2014-15.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the proposed changes to the organisation and operation of the Southern Staffordshire Partnership intended to better influence the Local Enterprise Partnerships and related funding opportunities.
- 2.2 That the Southern Staffordshire Partnership be advised that the Council's notice of its intention to cease its contributions remains in place but with a revised effective date of 31 March 2015;
- 2.3 That the Council makes a contribution of £8000 to the Southern Staffordshire Partnership for 2014-15 to be met from existing budgets.
- 2.4 That Cabinet receives a further report on a financial and operational assessment of the Council's continued membership of the Southern Staffordshire Partnership in time to inform the Partnership's next Annual General Meeting planned for December 2014.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The Council is one of the founder members of the Southern Staffordshire Partnership (SSP), an economic regeneration partnership of public and private sector interests which was established to foster the economic wellbeing of the southern part of Staffordshire. The Council's Chief Executive has been the vice-chair of the Partnership for the last two years. The SSP was formed in 2001 to provide a vehicle for the needs and opportunities of southern Staffordshire to be recognised in the work of the then Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands. Over recent years the economic development and governance landscape has changed with the emergence of the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and this has influenced both the role of the SSP and the direct economic development activities of the Council.
- 3.2 The Council is currently one of four district councils on the SSP board who, along with Staffordshire University, two colleges and a business support provider, fund the work of the Partnership. This work is delivered through the employment of the Partnership's Director. For 2013-14 the cost to the Council is £10,500. For 2014-15, as a result of the use of LEP funds, the cost to the Councils is planned to fall to £8,000.
- 3.3 In recognition of budgetary pressures and the direct involvement of the Council's economic development service with the LEPs, the Chief Executive was mandated to give notice to the SSP of the Council's intention to cease its contribution from the end of 2013-14 and as a consequence withdraw from the Partnership. This notice was given by the Chief Executive at the SSP Executive Board in February 2013. This mandate was endorsed formally when the Council set its budget for 2013-14 subject to the decision being reviewed by report to Cabinet later in the financial year – this report.
- 3.4 Section 5 of this report notes the importance of maintaining maximum influence on the LEPs through 2014-15. To respond to the LEP agenda, at its AGM last December and as a response to this Council's notice, the SSP amended its governance and operational arrangements to better focus on exerting influence on the LEPs. It aims to be an effective strategic body collaborating on policies and programmes which affect southern Staffordshire and pressing a collective view within both the Stoke and Staffordshire and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEPs. To do so the organisation is to change to become a vehicle for the Leaders of the SSP Councils. This new approach has not yet commenced.
- 3.5 In recognition of the above, it is recommended that the Council continues its membership for a further year and reviews its position in time for the SSP AGM in December 2014. This recommendation is based on the best interests of the District being served by exerting influence on the LEPs both directly from the involvement of the Council's own officers and collaboratively with the District's southern Staffordshire neighbours through the SSP. It recognises that a more effective partnership of southern Staffordshire districts will carry weight within the LEPs as a counter-balance to the metropolitan areas, Stoke and other groupings such as the economic regeneration partnership formed by the three north Worcestershire districts. It recognises that the new SSP arrangements designed

to strengthen the political alliance of the partnership have not yet had time to bed in and be tested; and that withdrawal of the Council from the SSP will have serious consequences for its future, probably resulting in its inability to continue in its current form.

- 3.6 It is recommended that the £8,000 cost of the Council's membership of the SSP for 2014-15 is met from existing resources within the Chief Executive's area.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 This report supports the Council's Corporate Priorities, in particular those associated with securing Prosperity for the District. The work of the SSP largely complements the achievement of this ambition.

5 Report Detail

Background.

- 5.1 The SSP was set up in 2001 to articulate the economic challenges and the needs of southern Staffordshire to the key strategic bodies; to encourage and develop cross boundary regeneration projects and to share good practice. Through time the role of the SSP has changed from an external lobbying role in the days of Advantage West Midlands, to an internal facilitating and influencing role in the case of two LEPs; the Stoke and Staffordshire LEP (SSLEP) and the Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP (GBSLEP). For example, the SSP is currently championing the Enterprise Belt (a 'belt' of economic growth opportunities around the conurbation which includes Cannock Chase District) as one of the strategic investment concepts to be adopted by the LEPs; and has established the Southern Staffordshire Employment and Skills Board (ESB) one of four ESB's across the GBSLEP area which feed into the GBSLEP Board on the skills agenda.
- 5.2 In recent years three authorities have pulled out of the Partnership. The reasons for doing so have included financial pressures but also disagreements with the role and purpose of the SSP. Staffordshire County Council's decision was based on the view that only they and not a sub-regional partnership should represent economic interests in Staffordshire. Stafford Borough Council withdrew because they could not support the other SSP Councils' decision to leave InStaffs (a former Staffordshire inward investment company) because of its lack of focus on the south of the County. More recently, East Staffordshire Borough Council's decision to leave was in part because the SSP's resources were being used in support of the SSLEP rather than being wholly focussed on the GBSLEP.
- 5.3 At the SSP Executive Board in February 2013, the Chief Executive gave notice of Cannock Chase Council's intention to withdraw from the SSP at the end of March 2014. This decision was not based on any disagreement with the aims of the SSP – ensuring that southern Staffordshire had its own voice; that the area

could access the best support it could get; and acting as a bridge between the two LEPs. It was based on a view that Cannock Chase Council's subscription is not immune to budgetary pressures - in recent years the Council's subscription to the SSP has been paid via provision within the Section 106 Funds for Economic Development in place of provision from the General Fund. These funds are now reduced with approximately £157k remaining for use from 2014-15 onwards. The Council was expanding its own officer resource to work with the LEPs and in this context the decision questioned if the SSP subscription could be justified.

- 5.4 The mandate given to the Chief Executive to give notice of the Council's intentions to cease payment to the SSP at the end of 2013-14 was endorsed formally when the Council set its budget for 2013-14. This was subject to the decision being reviewed by report to Cabinet later in the financial year – this report.

Current Activities.

- 5.5 Government regard the LEPs as a major part of their efforts to secure post-recession economic recovery, effectively making them the 'only economic development game in town'. At the national level the LEPs have established sufficient credibility with Government to have secured significant funding from the proposed Local Growth Fund (LGF) and are also being tasked with responsibility for the new European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) which will commence in mid 2014. At the local level the GBSLEP has successfully negotiated with Government a "first wave" City Deal, whilst the SSLEP are progressing a "second wave" City Deal proposal. Both LEPs are currently producing Strategic Economic Plans (SEPs) which will set the context for the draw-down of the LGF and ESIF monies. The SEPs are due to be finalised during the first part of 2014 and run to 2020.
- 5.6 In this context, it is anticipated that the early part of 2014-15 will see the LEPs shift their focus from engagement and strategy formulation into delivery and action. Key announcements are anticipated from Government which will confirm the SEPs and ESIFs as well as the funding attached to them during this period. Considerable officer time has been invested in trying to ensure the best possible outcome for Cannock Chase District both independently and as part of the SSP.
- 5.7 In response to these new demands and the Cannock Chase notice, at the SSP AGM in December 2013, the Partnership adopted a new constitution to provide it with a new direction and structure to be able to better influence the work of the LEPs. The aim is to strengthen the political alliance of the partnership to be better able to present a collective view to the LEPs. This recognises that the LEPs are now the main vehicles for the delivery of the Governments growth agenda and in 2014-15 will be competing for Government and European investment funds and will be expected to accelerate delivery of jobs, skills, and business and infrastructure investment. Next year will also see the start of use of the European Transition Funding which is ring fenced for southern Staffordshire within the GBSLEP.
- 5.8 The Government's confirmation of the role of LEPs as the main vehicles for economic growth opens a new chapter in the SSP's role of speaking for the

interests of southern Staffordshire. The challenges of this changing role and the way the SSP is planning to adapt to meet them are set out in the Secretary's Report to the SSP's last AGM in December 2013 attached at Appendix 1. This provides an overview of the work of the Partnership in 2013-14 including the proposals for its 2014-15 budget. To demonstrate the ability of the SSP to deliver in its role and compliment the work of its members, attached at Appendix 2 is a summary of impact provided by the SSP.

- 5.9 In support of the new direction for the SSP its Director has commented 'that the restructuring of the SSP, the work on the Enterprise Belt, the commitment given from the partners at the [2013] AGM, and the business engagement work for the SSLEP Secretariat make the SSP even more relevant to influencing the LEPs. This is all the more important given the additional resources going into the recently formalised North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration Service re the GBSLEP, and the influence of Stoke in the SSLEP.'
- 5.10 The Council has not relied solely on the activities of the SSP and the alliance it represents in the task of influencing the LEP agendas and thereby securing benefit for the District. Considerable staff resource has been deployed, particularly over the last two years, in directly supporting the work of the LEPs, particularly the GBSLEP. This proactive approach has proved beneficial, for example by securing support for electrification of the Chase Line; the funding of improvements to the Churchbridge junction; offers of funding for developments on the Mill Green and Kingswood Lakeside employment sites; and most recently, securing support for Council projects as part of the GBSLEP SEP work; and securing support for Assisted Area status in three Cannock Wards.
- 5.11 There are other examples which demonstrate the benefits of work by both the SSP and the District's own staff resource. The SSP and District Council worked jointly to establish the Business Development Programme, under which Cannock Chase based businesses (amongst other southern Staffordshire businesses) are eligible for EU funding programmes previously restricted to the conurbation. The programme was then shaped and implemented locally by Council officers with the result that some 10 local businesses have benefitted so far. In other work areas, the SSP has helped to position southern Staffordshire Districts to benefit from the LEPs. For example, establishing an inward investment and visitor economy remit for Marketing Birmingham which will cover southern Staffordshire; establishing southern Staffordshire representation in the SSLEP and its secretariat; establishing the southern Staffordshire Employment and Skills Board and championing the Enterprise Belt concept (see 5.1).

Further Review in 2014-15

- 5.12 2014-15 will be a crucial year as the LEPs compete for Government funding from the Local Growth Fund and determine how European funding will be spent, including the £28m of Transitional Funding ring-fenced for Southern Staffordshire in the GBSLEP. It is not considered that it is in the best interests of the Council to be lessening the influence of the Partnership on the LEPs at this time. It is recommended that the Council funds a further year of membership from existing budgets and reviews its intention to withdraw in time for the Council's position to be made clear at the SSP AGM in December 2014.

5.13 The recommended review of the Council’s membership of the SSP later in 2014 will provide an opportunity to assess the revised governance and delivery arrangements agreed at the AGM in December 2013. In particular:

- are they effective;
- are they aligned with the interests of the Council and respond to the needs of the District;
- has the new structure of the SSP and its role with the LEPs delivered benefits to the District during 2014-15;
- are these benefits over and above those achieved by the involvement of its own officers;
- whether or not continued membership of the SSP represents value for money; and
- what is the future value of the SSP and how would it need to change once the SEP and the ESIF have been finalised and the strategic context for delivery has been set.

5.14 If Cabinet supports this recommended approach, it is proposed that the Council’s £8,000 membership costs for 2014-15 are met from existing budgets available to the Chief Executive.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

6.1.1 The table below details the existing provision that has been made within the General fund budgets:

Budgetary Provision	2012-13 Approved	2013-14 Approved	2014-15 Draft	2015-16 Draft	2016-17 Draft
General Fund	0	3,500	0	0	0
Section 106 Funds - Sub Regional Activities	8,820	10,500	0	0	0
Outturn	9,750				
Estimated Outturn		10,500	8,000		

- 6.1.2 In 2012-13 provision was made for £8,820 to be funded from S106 funding specific to Economic Development; an initial bill for £8,000 was paid and an additional bill for £1,750 followed at the year end; this was due to a number of Authorities withdrawing from the Partnership, as referred to in para 5.2.
- 6.1.3 In 2013-14 it was anticipated that the annual cost would increase further so provision via S106 was increased to £10,500 and an additional £3,500 of General Fund funding was included as part of the budget setting process. An initial bill for £10,500 was paid in July 2013, it is understood that no additional payment will be requested at the end of 2013-14.
- 6.1.4 Also as part of the 2013-14 budget setting process, no general fund provision was made for 2014-15, however, additional funding was available to be considered subject to a report being submitted to Cabinet.
- 6.1.5 As referred to in para 3.6 the £8,000 membership subscription for 2014-15 can be met from existing funding available to the Chief Executive.
- 6.1.6 If it is determined that the Council should remain a Member of the Partnership in the long term, Members will need to determine the financial year that the general fund pays for the annual subscription and alter the draft budget accordingly.

6.2 Legal

The legal implications are set out in the report.

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Section 17 (Crime Prevention)

None

6.5 Human Rights Act

None

6.6 Data Protection

None

6.7 Risk Management

None

6.8 Equality & Diversity

None

6.9 Best Value

None

7. Appendices to the Report

Appendix 1	SSP Secretary's Report to the 2013 AGM
Appendix 2	SSP Summary note on the Strategic and Operational Impact of the SSP

Previous Consideration

Background Papers

Secretary's Report to the 2013 AGM

2013 was another challenging year for southern Staffordshire as the Governments austerity measures really took effect. Some tough decisions had to be made, more efficiency savings had to be found, and new ways of working identified and implemented. The reductions in public spending that require us to work in different and smarter ways has highlighted the benefit of having the SSP.

Supporting and influencing the Local Enterprise Partnerships continued to be a key task for the Partnership with the Government finally giving a major commitment to the LEPs as the key drivers for local economic growth. Their role in delivering the Local Growth Fund from 2015 and the new EU Programme running from 2014 means our involvement and influence in the LEPs takes on even greater importance.

As a Partnership I believe we have again had some considerable impact and successes this year. A key action was to persuade the GBSLEP that their ESIF contain a southern Staffordshire chapter that we authored outlining our key challenges and opportunities for investment. This was to influence the £28m of the GBSLEP allocation ringfenced for southern Staffordshire, and was supported by the development of our Southern Staffordshire Enterprise Belt prospectus which was produced after extensive consultation with and input from partners and other stakeholders. Both of these were also shared with the SSLEP as we sought to also influence the focus of the SSLEP ESIF. Our local Education and Skills Board was established bringing together the key players influencing the skills agenda in the south of the County, and we commissioned the Regional Observatory to undertake a skills needs analysis. Within the GBS LEP we continued the dialogue with Marketing Birmingham on visitor economy and inward investment support, and secured grant assistance for 12 companies via the Business Development Programme. Within the SSLEP we secured a place on the Secretariat and funding to improve business engagement activity in the south of the County.

The pressures on resources and the need to influence the LEPs even further means we need to change the way in which we, as a Partnership, operate. At the September Board meeting we discussed different options open to the Partnership and agreed a restructuring which we would formally adopt at this AGM. This new structure should allow us to make even better use of our very limited resources, and exert more influence on the LEPs that cover southern Staffordshire. We should note here the increasing expectations from Stoke City Council within the SSLEP, and the establishment of the North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration Team by the 3 districts from Worcestershire in the GBSLEP.

We continue to have some real challenges ahead in resourcing the Partnership and we should note that we are now running the Partnership on 50% of the original budget – the result of the closure of Business Link and the LSC, followed by withdrawal by the County Council, Stafford Borough Council and East Staffordshire Borough Council.

In recognising the pressures on each partner we have held the funding contributions to the same level as last year (in fact for the third year in a row) and are working on the basis that all remaining partners will make such contributions again next year. This does leave us with a small shortfall but one we believe we can address over the coming months. This year's anticipated outturn budget along with the 2013/14 budget are summarised overleaf.

Southern Staffordshire Partnership 2014/15 Draft Budget

	<u>Costs (£)</u>	
<u>Total Expenditure</u>	64,600	
<u>Income</u>		
Districts(4x 8k)	32,000	
University (1 x 8k)	8,000	
Colleges (2x 1.3)	2,600	
BES (1x0.5k)	500	
GBSLEP Local ESB support (SFA)	7,000	
SSLEP business engagement (CF)	4,000	
<u>Total Income</u>	54,100	
Outturn balance b/f from 13/14		10,000
(redundancy reserve)		4,800
Outturn balance c/f to 14/15		5,200
Income after carry forward	59,300	
Projected (surplus) deficit on year	5,200	

Options for shortfall

- (i) **Consultancy work** – in 2013/14 the SSP Director was commissioned to write the Tamworth Growth and Regeneration Strategy and the Tamworth and Lichfield BEP Plan securing an additional 3.5k for the SSP. This was directly commissioned work and if partners were to look at further bespoke work alongside the SSP proactively bidding for manageable and relevant contracts the shortfall could be partly or wholly covered.
- (ii) **LEP's** – building on the role of the SSP as a bridge between the SSLEP and the GBSLEP we would propose to the LEPs a clear project plan whereby we would provide secretarial support to the LEPs alongside the key role of maintaining alignment and collaboration for the overlap area. This has been discussed informally with both LEPs, and there is a proposal going to the GSBLEP Board in January as part of a presentation on the Enterprise Belt.
- (iii) **New funding members** – building on our role and influence in the LEPs we could involve and offer membership to a number of other organisations such as RSL's.
- (iv) **EU funding** – More difficult given the loss of the institutional capacity building theme, the lead in time to get projects approved, and the amount of internal competition in the LEPs. However, we do have the match funding, it may be seen as an alternative to option (ii) for the LEPs, and it could/should link to assisting with delivery of LEP wide programmes in southern Staffordshire and with collaboration across LEPs
- (v) **Reduce the hours/salary of the Director** – this has been done before and could be put in place for the first 2 or 3 months of 14/15 whilst efforts continue to secure additional funding. The current budget would cover a 4 day week post for the whole year if necessary.

Proposal – to continue to pursue each of the additional funding options and to review quarterly – if no additional funding secured by September agree the Director post is reduced to a 4 day a week funded post and to review again at the December 2014 AGM.

Summary note on the Strategic and Operational Impact of the SSP

The primary role of the SSP is a strategic one though there have and will remain a number of operational activities that help to support the strategic focus. The availability of the £100k of TEC legacy funds from 2003 has helped with the operational activity and this was clearly greater in the past when were significant funds were available and less so recently as the budget has been utilised.

Established primarily to influence AWM, the SSP Board recently agreed a new structure so that it could better influence the LEPs that had in effect replaced AWM. That said the very effective strategic work of the SSP over the past 3 years has ensured that Districts are now well placed to benefit from their membership of the LEPs. However the strength of the unitaries (and the recent establishment of the North Worcestershire Partnership) within the GBSLEP makes the need for a refreshed SSP all the more important. Likewise the strength of Stoke within the SSLEP calls for continued working at the southern Staffordshire level to balance what is a very strong North Staffs focus that ensured that Districts.

Over the past few years there have been a number of notable operational successes in supporting/leading bids for public sector funding – often using some of the TEC Legacy funding (original £100k working budget) to secure major investment in the area, resulting in securing:

- a) £3.8m for a Staffordshire University led programme (HE Full Circle/HE Centres)
- b) £1.5m for the Staffordshire Renewables Programme
- c) £250k for the M6 Toll inward investment marketing programme
- d) £100k for the Southern Staffordshire Professional and Business Services Cluster
- e) £90k for the southern Staffordshire Visitor Economy Strategy
- f) £40k for the Think Local 4 Business project
- g) £40k for developing business support capacity in the GBSLEP

In addition, through working collaboratively and developing an evidence base around the southern Staffordshire economy we have been able to build a coherent and robust case for the benefit of the area. Such activity has had both direct monetary benefits to partners and helped strategically position partners to take advantage of wider collaborative working.

- Our response to the review of the way in which the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive grant was administered argued for the allocation to be on a southern Staffordshire basis rather than a Staffordshire and Shropshire basis. As a result of our case being successfully argued we secured an additional £15k of grant per District
- Through commissioning the Shires Town Study, then through our response to the AWM review of its Regional Economic Strategy, and more recently through commissioning Professor John Bryson at Birmingham University to lead on the Edge of City economies study we positioned ourselves to be first part of the

Birmingham City Region and then part of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP

- Engaging with Birmingham City Council officers to develop a GBSLEP wide business grant programme. We worked with colleagues to develop a support programme and successfully bid for ERDF. The SSP Director as Chair of the GBSLEP Business Support Group worked with BIS/CLG colleagues to develop the initial proposals and to negotiate the final shape of a bid. This was submitted and then further partners were engaged. Importantly we also argued a need for an indicative allocation of the grant funding on a District by District basis.

Over the past 3 years the key operational activities have included:

Business Support Engagement

- completing the RIEP funded “business engagement” project which focused on the Think Local project as an exemplar for the west midlands
- managing 2 Business Link secondees to help develop the approach to business support (post BL) for the GBSLEP
- securing £40,000 of grant from BIS to carry out an audit of the currently available business support and to develop the Greater Birmingham LEP Business Support Portal
- securing £10,000 of grant from BIS to support the Think Local 4 Business project

Design Reviews

- holding 18 Design Review Panels reviewing 22 schemes at pre application stage providing advice to relevant Planning Officers
- reaching agreement with MADE to enhance and continue with a local Design Review Panel that complies with the requirements of the new NPPF and provides a zero cost option for partners
- holding 2 successful Design Awards competition with 46 entries

Community Regeneration

- commissioned the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) to carry out a study into the resilience of the southern Staffordshire economy providing a series of recommendations and advice to partners
- holding a successful Regeneration Awards competition with 38 entries

Business Support Offer

- initiating and led the discussions with Birmingham City Council through 2011 and 2012 to understand their approach to business support and to develop some joint bids
- establishing and chaired the GBSLEPs business support group
- leading discussions with BIS London on the GBSLEP RGF submissions
- **working with Birmingham City Council to develop the LEPs Business Development/High Growth bids, shaping the bid through the GBSLEP Business Support Group, and successfully arguing for indicative allocation of resource and output on a District by District basis – resulting in the successful £5M bid**
- organising before the Business Link WM closure a workshop for partners with senior BL staff to understand the implications of the BL closure

- Arranging and hosting a workshop with key national BL and BIS staff to discuss the syndication of the new BL website into partner sites

Economic Strategy

- contributing to the GBSLEP Economic Strategy which was to have a clear focus on the relationship between the conurbation and southern Staffordshire
- following discussions at the GBSLEP Board on an Enterprise Zone bid we developed and promoted the Enterprise Belt concept, adopted now as a core part of the LEPs thinking
- jointly managing with Professor John Bryson the 'edge of city economies' study funded via the EREBUS programme

Skills

- securing £20k via the City Skills Fund (following considerable lobbying) to develop a Southern Staffordshire Employment and Skills Board
- working with Solihull MBC (as the accountable body) to secure additional skills investment into southern Staffordshire via the GBSLEP
- taking the lead in managing the southern Staffordshire ESB as one of 4 local ESBs supporting the main GSBLEP ESB
- securing 315k to commission Marketing Birmingham to carry out a base line skills audit and to develop a southern Staffordshire Skills Plan

Inward Investment

- Hosting a workshop with the 'Make it Stoke and Staffs' inward investment team for District and other SSP partners
- Initiating meetings with Marketing Birmingham to explore the potential of support for inward investment across parts of southern Staffordshire
- Authored paper to GBSLEP Officer steering Group proposing LEP wide approach to inward investment

EU Funding

- Successfully lobbied for and then authored a southern Staffordshire chapter in the GSBLEP European Strategic Investment Framework for the 2014-20 round of funding
- Worked with Birmingham City Council to secure a programme of grant assistance to local businesses from the 2007-13 programme (to run through to 2015)

Local Enterprise Partnerships

- In 2012 securing observer status at the Board, access to Board papers, and places for SSP Partners on each of the main SSLEP sub groups following considerable lobbying and relationship building
- Encouraging and supporting the applications to the SSLEP Board from 2 southern Staffordshire businesses in the latest round of recruitment
- In 2013 securing observer status at the new Executive Board and a place on the Secretariat
- Developing the Enterprise Belt workstream providing a clear focus on the towns and investment opportunities across southern Staffordshire

- Providing lead officers for the Business Support, Funding and Planning workstreams; and providing the mechanisms to share sub group information across the area

If we were to focus on the some successes of the past year, which also show the link between strategic and operational activity, then the following could be highlighted. The SSP:

- a) secured place for southern Staffordshire on the new SSLEP Executive Board
- b) got the Enterprise Belt firmly on the agenda of the GBSLEP
- c) secured delivery of a major ERDF business support programme into southern Staffordshire (with indicative District allocations)

In respect of the first item we spent some 12 months working with colleagues on the LEP Board and within the County Council to turn around a difficult situation whereby Districts were not being given a role in the LEP, and those also within the GBSLEP were viewed with some caution against a backdrop of a view that LEPs were in some instances in competition. Through effective lobbying and articulating a wish to be supportive and involved has resulted in reciprocal access from the SSLEP. This has helped with the cross LEP relationship in helping to deliver Growing Places Fund schemes. However we should note that experience of the “Deal” arrangements have been less encouraging with a need to continue to build trust between the 2 LEPs and a more inclusive role for the Districts and other partners and a more transparent way of working.

With the second item we are continuing to work with Birmingham University to underpin the validity of the Enterprise Belt, we have secured a specific sub group specifically looking at it, and are lobbying key individuals to get this properly understood and part of the new economic strategy. This is key in ensuring we have a LEP wide approach to investment opportunities which then plays across into the transport, skills and business support agendas also

The final point builds from a strategic desire to engage with key partners in the GBSLEP to see what benefits could accrue. A series of meetings, and a focus on relationship building with colleagues in the City Council business development team was started by the SSP at the end of 2010, has now borne fruit in a major ERDF programme for the area. The ‘Business Development’ programme was borne out of an existing (though closing ERDF programme run by the City Council) programme, and was developed to include LEP wide partners following discussions with the SSP in our role in leading on business support for the LEP.