



Report to the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire Joint Committee

Date: **25 March 2014**

Report of: **Gloria Ighodaro**

Subject: **PUSH Interim Executive Director's Report**

SUMMARY

This report represents an additional method of PUSH Business to be reported to the Joint Committee. The Executive Director's report provides an opportunity for issues which are significant, but do not justify a full report in their own right, to be brought to the attention of the Joint Committee for decision or for information. The report is divided into Parts A and B accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Joint Committee:

1. AGREE to reinstate PUSH's SELP membership to a level 3 subscription, at a cost of £6.6K which would commence on 26 March 2014 until further notice.
2. APPROVE the recommendation to appoint Paul Nichols, Head of Planning Transport and Sustainability at Southampton City Council, on a part-time secondment basis to manage and steer the delivery of the new spatial strategy at an operational level.
3. NOTE the matters for Information outlined in Part B of this report.

PART A: MATTERS FOR DECISION

PUSH MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOUTHERN ENGLAND LOCAL PARTNERS (SELP)

1. At its meeting in September the Joint Committee received a report on SELP and the success that PUSH has had to date in securing European funding to develop and support economic development activities of PUSH partners. A key recommendation of the report at the time was for the Committee to approve the downgrading of PUSH's SELP membership from a level 4 (a cost of £13K) to a reduced subscription fee of £6.6K for a level 3 membership for financial year 2014/15. At the meeting however, the Solent LEP advised of their support to explore a joint SELP membership with PUSH recognising the benefits of aligning the efforts, expertise and resources of both Partnerships. Unfortunately this process has taken longer than expected due to the priority in developing the Solent Strategic Economic Plan. As a consequence, the LEP will need longer to review their position on this matter.
2. To enable PUSH local authorities to continue to benefit from the important services that the SELP membership provides in accessing European funding, approval is sought from the Joint Committee to reinstates PUSH's SELP Membership for a level 3 subscription, until a joint arrangement with the LEP is finalised. Subject to the Committees approval, PUSH's membership would commence on 26 March 2014 until further notice.
3. PUSH partners continue to work collaboratively to maximise opportunities in accessing European funding that support economic development activities and priorities in the sub region. Officers from the PUSH local authorities meet regularly under the auspices of the **European Collaboration Group** established by PUSH two years ago. The purpose of the group is to form a strategic partnership within the Solent area that will support applications for EU funded projects related to Economic Development and Social Inclusion and support delivery and implementation of programmes resulting from subsequent successful applications. Essentially the group identifies potential funding streams; develops joint Projects and bids for EU funding.
4. The Joint Committee is asked to AGREE to reinstate PUSH's SELP membership to a level 3 subscription, at a cost of £6.6K which would commence on 26 March 2014 until further notice.

PLANNING OFFICER SUPPORT

5. A report seeking approval to commence the PUSH Spatial Planning Review is due to be considered at this meeting. In support of this work, PUSH requires professional and technical support during the preparation of the new spatial strategy. Gloria Ighodaro (Acting Interim Executive Director) will have overall programme management responsibility. However, the appointed consultants will require a professional Planning Client with expertise in strategic planning, to manage and steer the delivery of the new spatial strategy at an operational level. As a consequence, a further sum of up to £50,000 has been set aside to fund this support. A proposal has been put forward by Southampton City Council for Paul Nichols, Head of Planning Transport and Sustainability, to work alongside Gloria Ighodaro to undertake this role (on a part-time secondment from Southampton City Council). The PUSH Chief Executives Group considered this proposal at its meeting on 14 March 2014 at which there was a unanimous recommendation made to support this proposal. As Planning Theme Lead for the newly named Housing and Planning Delivery Panel and Chairman of the Planning Officers Group, Paul has significant experience in this field both from a local and sub regional perspective.
6. The Joint Committee are advised to APPROVE the recommendation to appoint Paul Nichols, Head of Planning Transport and Sustainability at Southampton City Council, on a part-time secondment basis to manage and steer the delivery of the new spatial strategy at an operational level.

PART B: MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

SOLENT STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN (SEP) UPDATE

7. PUSH local authorities continue to support the LEP on the preparatory work towards finalising the Solent SEP. Established by the Solent LEP in September 2013, the Solent Local Growth Panel comprises members from business, education and local authorities, to enable joint working and consider funding opportunities, information and make recommendations to the Solent LEP Board. A key focus for the panel is the development of the SEP. At its February meeting the Panel received an update on the Draft SEP capturing some of the Asks, Freedoms and Flexibilities that will be negotiated with Government. Within this context, the Panel was given the opportunity to note the proposed developments that will be included in the Growth Plan and associated infrastructure requirements necessary to make the schemes viable.
8. The level of investment secured by this area from Government is contingent on the robust evidence base that supports the ambitions of the Solent SEP. PUSH continues to play a key facilitation and enabling role specifically in relation to spatial planning, infrastructure and statutory policies related to environmental protection. The Solent SEP is ambitious and focuses on projects that are transformational and will therefore deliver the greatest Gross Value Added (GVA). Key investment priorities include activities focussed on Skills, Priority sectors, Enterprise, Inward Investment and Infrastructure. The LEP continues to work with a wide range of organisational and sector representatives to help shape the vision and ambitions of the Solent SEP for 2014-2020. All LEPs are required to submit their final version of their growth plan to Government by 31st March 2014. It is expected that Government will make a Local Growth Fund Offer to all LEPs and complete Growth Deal negotiations by July 2014.

SOLENT LOCAL TRANSPORT BODY (LTB) UPDATE

9. Members will recall that in June 2013 Spending Review, the funding expected to be allocated to LTBs was diverted to form part of the £2billion per annum Local Growth Fund (LGF), to be channelled through Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). Each LTB submitted an Assurance Framework to DfT, which set out the purpose, structure and operating principles of the LTB, and how prioritisation and investment decision-making would take place. A funding allocation was identified for each LTB, which provided the funding envelope within which a set of priorities should be developed. A total of £19.2million has been allocated to the Solent LTB area for the period 2015-16 to 2018-19. This is calculated on a per capita basis and will be sourced from the formulaic element of the Local Growth Fund.
10. The priority schemes as reported at the last Joint Committee remain as Dunsbury Hill Farm Link Road, Station Quarter North, Southampton, The Hard Interchange, Portsmouth and A27 Improvements. In addition, the LTB, at its meeting in February considered a further scheme, named Cross-Solent Ferry Interchanges. All five schemes are required to develop robust business cases, so that the LTB over-programmes, to ensure there are schemes for delivery

should any of the four priorities encounter unforeseen difficulties. The approach to over-programme is in accordance with section 2.3 of the revised Assurance Framework, attached as Annex A to this report. A robust and transparent process for the commitment of funding is underway and the identified schemes will undergo independent scrutiny. Recommendations made by the Independent Assessor will be presented to the LTB Investment Panel. To harmonise with wider Local Growth Fund decision-making, the LTB has approved that the advice of the Investment Panel is presented to the Solent Local Growth Panel. In addition, any decisions to pre-commit funding would be made by the Solent LEP Board.

11. A recent letter from the Department for Transport (DfT) to the LTB, confirms the funding allocation profile, with £7.2million available in 2015-16 and the remainder (£12million) of the £19.2million formula allocation available in 2016-17. Based on the advice of scheme promoters of the four prioritised schemes, the draft SEP set out a funding profile of £13.6million in 2015-16 with the remainder (£5.6million) in 2016-17. This reflected the proposed delivery of Dunsbury Hill Farm Link Road, Station Quarter North, and The Hard Interchange, in 2015-16, with the A27 Improvement scheme being delivered in 2016-17.
12. The Solent Assurance Framework sets out the purpose, structure and operating principles of the LTB, and how prioritisation and investment decision-making would take place. The framework attached to this report which, includes part 3 (sections 3.1 - 3.6) that relates to the value for money was recently approved by DfT and subsequently by the Solent LTB for publication.

SOLENT GROWING PLACES FUND PROGRAMME

13. In addition to representing PUSH on the Solent LTB, Solent Employment and Skills Board and Solent Local Growth Panel, the PUSH Interim Executive Director is also overseeing the delivery of the Solent Growing Places Programme on behalf of the Solent LEP. PUSH was first approached by the LEP back in December 2013, to provide a part-time Programme management resource for the £16.7m revolving loans Fund Programme. Key responsibilities include establishing the necessary monitoring processes & protocol, progress reporting to the Solent LTB, Solent LEP Board and the completion of Monitoring Returns on funded schemes to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
14. To date, a total of £13m of the £16.7m loan fund has been allocated to support the capital build of the new CEMAST (Centre of Excellence for Engineering, Manufacturing and Advanced Skills Training) College located at the Enterprise Zone, Daedulus and the Onsite / Offsite infrastructure requirements within and to the Enterprise Zone, Daedulus.
15. The Joint Committee is asked to NOTE that the PUSH Interim Executive Director is also Programme Lead for the Solent Growing Places Fund.

RECOMMENDATION

It is RECOMMENDED that the Joint Committee:

16. APPROVE: the reinstatement of PUSH's SELP membership to a level 3 subscription, at a cost of £6.6K which would commence on 26 March 2014 until further notice.
17. APPROVE the recommendation to appoint Paul Nichols, Head of Planning Transport and Sustainability at Southampton City Council, on a part-time secondment basis to manage and steer the delivery of the new spatial strategy at an operational level.
18. NOTE the matters for Information outlined in Part B of this report.

Background Papers:

- Membership of Southern England Local Partners (SELP) and European funding update, 23 September 2013
- PUSH Executive Director's Report – 23 September 2013

Reference Papers:

- Revised Solent LTB Assurance Framework appended as Annex A to this report.

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact: Gloria Ighodaro (Programme and Information Manager & Acting Interim Executive Director) Tel. No. 02392 688920
E-mail: gloria.ighodaro@push.gov.uk