



# **Report to the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting**

Date: **19 November 2013**

Report of: **Elizabeth Smith, Regeneration Officer at Southampton City Council**

Subject: **Membership of Southern England Local Partners (SELP) and European funding update**

## **SUMMARY**

This report aims to update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on facilities/services that SELP provides and the extent to which PUSH has made use of them. In this regard, the report also reflects on the value for money benefits gained from PUSH's SELP membership as a consequence of close workings with SELP and European partners. The level of SELP membership ranges from one to five with level 1 providing access to basic facilities and services (at a fee of £2,200) and level 5 (at a fee of £22,000) providing a much more comprehensive and greater access to SELP facilities and services in Brussels. SELP Members are required to serve a one year withdrawal notice. PUSH's current annual SELP subscription is £13,000 for a level 4, which is due to conclude in February 2014 following PUSH's termination of its membership in February 2013. In addition, an overview of current European funded activities led by PUSH Local Authority and the level of EU funding secured in the sub region to date is attached as Appendix A to this report. Appendix B provides a glossary.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

NOTE the intention for PUSH and Solent LEP to explore having a joint SELP Membership recognising the benefits of aligning the efforts, expertise and resources of both Partnerships.

NOTE the progress made to access European funding to develop economic development activities of PUSH partners.

## Membership of Southern England Local Partners (SELP)

### Background

1. SELP is a partnership of local authorities, universities and other public and private stakeholders and helps its members to get the most from UK membership of the European Union. Using its office in Brussels, SELP provides its members with information on EU policy and programmes, and facilitates strategic contacts, partnerships and networks for exchange of best practice. Other bodies from within South Hampshire who are SELP members are Hampshire County Council, Southern Enterprise Alliance and the universities of Portsmouth and Southampton.
2. SELP provides a range of services to its members including:
  - Provision of information for European funding programmes and streams
  - Provision of in-depth and up-to-date knowledge of relevant EU policy
  - Development of strategic contacts, partnerships and networks for the exchange of best practice and to enhance the profile of our partners in Europe
  - SELP Presence in Brussels as well as close links with Members of European Parliament (MEP's), national government and other partners, which ensure members are aware of emerging policies and opportunities in Europe.
3. Furthermore, SELP delivers added value to the work of its sub-regional members by providing advice, guidance and support across 3 core areas of activity:
  - Strategic planning – influencing the development of future European policy and legislation e.g. co-ordinating and representing SELP members' in consultation processes and brokering opportunities.
  - Intelligence gathering and dissemination – information, advice and guidance on EC programmes with specific emphasis upon areas relevant to sub regional growth plans (economic growth, job creation, skills and training, renewable energies, maritime activity and transport).
  - Profile and presence – showcasing projects in development and key successes from the sub-region. Securing the region's profile and status as an economic hub with the Commission through forums, events and networking.
4. In 2012 PUSH became a Member of SELP over a two year period (2011/12 and 2012/13) at a cost of £13,000 per annum (with one year's notice of withdrawal required). Membership of SELP is due for renewal on 1 April each year and members must give one year's notice of their intention to terminate membership. At the March meeting, the Joint Committee approved the recommendation to serve notice and terminate PUSH's membership to review the benefits gained to date. This report aims to provide this information and subject to the Joint Committees decision, a recommendation is made to rejoin SELP but downgrade to Level 3 membership. This level of Membership will provide adequate access to SELP services and facilities that PUSH will require in the forthcoming financial year 2014/15.

5. PUSH's current level 4 membership which is due to expire in February 2013 provides a tailored support mechanism. It allows PUSH local authorities heavily involved in EU projects to gain more information on EU policy and legislative developments as well as networking. In addition to everything included at level three, this level offers:
  - Priority access to Board membership (subject to the normal requirements), with associated influence over business planning and management of the partnership
  - Organisation of programmes, meetings and events with European officials and key EU stakeholders.
  - Facilitated access to Brussels based networks
  - Early warning of EU policy and legislation developments – participation in associated events
  - Provision of information and guidance on lobbying
  - Organisation of in-house events and visits
  - Input to the drafting of position statements and similar
  - Two half-day visits to your organisation by SELP staff
  - Arrangement of secondment opportunities in the Brussels Office
  
6. Going forward, the recommendation made at the September Joint Committee meeting was strongly in favour of exploring the possibility of having a shared PUSH / Solent LEP SELP Membership subject to agreement with Brussels. At a fee of £25,000 for a level 5 this top level service would enable both PUSH and the Solent LEP to benefit from the following offering:
  - A position on the Board, with associated influence over business planning and management of the partnership
  - Direct input to the preparation of funding proposals, subject to resource availability
  - Priority in the business planning process and use of meeting rooms.
  - Organisation of showcase or bespoke events
  - In-depth, tailored and specialised briefings
  - Detailed profiles in partnership publicity and website
  - Active promotion in Brussels for policy, projects and initiatives
  - Liaison with high-level EU officials and politicians
  - Quarterly visits by Brussels staff to your organisation
  - Opportunities for involvement in high profile external events
  - Active representation on Brussels based networks/ partnerships
  - Receive reports or presentations on Brussels activities

### **Benefits of SELP Membership to date**

7. The Partnership's SELP membership has resulted in a number of benefits to date:
  - SELP Annual Event (September 2012) hosted by Portsmouth University in collaboration with Portsmouth City Council. A series of Solent EU projects were showcased to a large audience of both UK and continental partners.
  - Delivered a range of training sessions open to PUSH Members to enhance understanding of EU affairs.

August 2012 SELP delivered a workshop in Basingstoke on EU funds 2014 -20. The training enabled intelligence gathering and dissemination – information, advice and guidance on EC programmes with specific emphasis upon areas relevant to sub regional growth plans (economic growth, job creation, skills and training, renewable energies, maritime activity and transport).

- SELP Peer Group and SELP Officer Group in Winchester in September 2012, which offered similar training to that described above.
  - January 2013 - Portsmouth City Council used the SELP office in Brussels to meet partners to develop an EU project. As a direct result of this meeting and the benefit of collaborative working with partners, the project was successful in securing a total of £25K for Portsmouth City Council.
  - February 2013 - Solent LEP and other UK LEPs were invited to a meeting organised by SELP with Graham Cope of the European Investment Fund. This meeting enabled the Solent LEP to understand the next period of EU funding 2014-2020 and the important role the LEPs will play.
  - SELP participated in the Solent EU Collaboration meeting in Southampton in February 2013. At this meeting, Members of SELP received a presentation on the next round of funding that will be available for the Environmental sector.
  - SELP regularly circulate their fortnightly EU Newsletters - the Brussels Bulletin. These cover six policy areas and include a more general EU affairs section.
8. Future SELP conferences, events and activities include:
- Open Days. This is the flagship DG Regio/Committee of the Regions event held in October (7-10 October 2013) and is an opportunity for EU regions to showcase their projects and examples of best practice. SELP will be involved in showcasing projects and identifying partners for project bids.
  - Additional European Commission annual events that SELP will attend and feedback on during 2013 include Green Week (May), Maritime Day (May), Sustainable Energy Week (June), eSkills Week (October), and Waste Reduction Week (November), 'Info Days' - providing advice and guidance on EU funding streams. SELP will also promote and disseminate project findings.
  - SELP is also active in networks like the Assembly of European Regions and the transport network POLIS (Hampshire), Peri -Urban Regions Network – PURPLE (Surrey) and ERLAI - the EU Regional Immigration Network (Brighton).
  - SELP's Annual Congress will take place in the autumn.
  - SELP's Executive Support Group will meet throughout the year to prepare Board business. SELP's Officer Group will meet on a quarterly basis to discuss EU affairs.

9. Planned subscriber events for this year include:
- An EU Funds Training event in London on 1 July
  - An MEP sponsored visit – “Back to EU Basics” in December 2013
  - An Interreg 5 Fact-Finder - autumn 2013 or Q1 2014 (possibly in Lille)
  - What does 2014-20 hold in store? A run through the EU’s Multiannual Financial Framework – autumn 2013 or Q1 2014
  - SELP subscribers’ day in Brussels (upon request and content-led by subscribers via the Officers Group).

### Value for money

10. During the 2012/13 membership period the PUSH local authorities secured £3m of EU funding. SELP provided support and information to PUSH to help secure these funds. In addition SELP facilitated a number of events, networking opportunities and intelligence and information sharing activities. This would indicate good value for money and return on PUSH's investment.

### European Funding Update

#### Overview

11. PUSH partners have to date worked 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.

#### Current projects

12. The table in Appendix A lists the European funded projects associated with economic development activities that are currently being delivered in the PUSH area. The total value of these projects is over £20m. Nearly £11m of this is being funded by the EC and £3m of European funding has been secured to directly support project activity by the PUSH partners. A range of other projects are also in development and at various stages in the bidding process. PUSH partners have to date participated in seven EU Programmes (Interreg IVA Channel, 2 Seas and IVC Programmes, Lifelong Learning, 7<sup>th</sup> Framework, European Integration Fund and Leonardo programmes) and 13 EU Projects in the period 2012-2013.
13. Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council, Southampton City Council and the Isle of Wight have been lead partners or the accountable body for 8 European projects (BEEMS, Tackling Social Exclusion (TSE), REMCAP, EMSAC, Gateway Portsmouth, REALM, SOREC and Easy Europe for SMEs). PUSH local authorities have been working on specific themes related to entrepreneurship, skills,

renewable energy, creative industries, culture, migrant integration, adult learning, and maritime sector.

### **Future European funding**

14. The remainder of 2013 will see the EU seeking to commit the remaining monies from the 2007-13 budgets. Early this financial year, Government announced that a significant amount of European funding for the period 2014-2020 would be devolved and administered by LEPs. In response to this commitment, all LEPs are currently in the process of developing its respective EU Local Investment Strategy which will outline how the devolved fund will be spent against the prescribed EU priorities. Solent LEP has begun consultation with a range of local public and private sector partners, the first of which was an event held on 22 July 2014 aimed at identifying key priorities for the Solent area. A total European funding allocation of €43 million for the period 2014 -2020 has been confirmed for the Solent area. This provides PUSH with an opportunity between now and 2014 to work closely with the Solent LEP to ensure that the Partnership is able to secure some the available funds for priority projects identified by PUSH partners.
  
15. The future policy areas relevant to PUSH and that should be focused on are:
  - Business and Entrepreneurship
  - Culture and tourism
  - Education and Skills
  - Environment and Sustainable Development including transport
  - Health and Social Inclusion
  - Maritime affairs
  
16. SELP will be working closely with LEP's nationally to prepare a new *EU Funding Guide 2014-20* over the summer of 2013. This will attempt to provide a detailed review of all of the relevant funding programmes in our target policy areas covering 2014-20. It will also offer advice and guidance and be a valuable resource which will be updated regularly. PUSH's continued membership of SELP will enable access to this information. At the local level, PUSH has to date been consulted by the Solent LEP to inform the preparation of the EU Investment Strategy for the Solent. As part of this process, PUSH recommended five out of a total of ten EU priorities for Solent LEP focus. These include support for small businesses, employment, skills, social inclusion and protecting the environment & promoting resource efficiency. To complement these priorities, PUSH is working collaboratively with the Solent LEP to ensure we join up our capacity, expertise and resources on priority European activities.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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18 NOTE the progress made to access European funding to develop economic development activities of PUSH partners.

**Background Papers:**

The Development and Delivery of European Structural and Investment Funds Strategies: supplementary Guidance to Local Enterprise Partnerships, published July 2013.

**Reference Papers:**

[Appendix A: European Funded Projects](#)

[Appendix B: Glossary](#)

**Enquiries:**

For further information on this report please contact:

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