

Agenda Item 5

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Notes of the Regional Planning Partnership Meeting Held on 25 January 2008 At Birmingham and Midland Institute, Birmingham

Present: Councillor Rex Roberts, OBE – Chairman (Staffordshire CC)

Local Authority Members:

Cllrs: R Badham – Vice Chair (Sandwell), P Smith (Birmingham), C Jones (Birmingham), P Douglas Osborn (Birmingham), N Campbell (Rugby), S Smith (Sandwell), S Ellis (Staffordshire Moorlands), C Smith (Telford & Wrekin), K Foster (Coventry), D Billson (South Staffordshire), N Roberts (Lichfield), I Courts (Solihull), T Williams (Cannock Chase), J Everall (Shropshire), S Geraghty (Worcestershire), E Harwood (Worcestershire), J Jones (Shrewsbury & Atcham), R Rowden (Worcester), J Pearce (Wychavon), A Griffiths (Walsall), B Douglas-Maul (Walsall)

Business Council Members: R Stone (Vice Chair), P Chopra and G Minshull

Other Stakeholder Group: R Evans (Vice Chair) and G Kells.

Officers: R Back (Rugby), J Watkins (WMBC), T Williams (WMRA), L Wroe (Coventry), A Johnson (South Staffordshire), C Hindle (Stafford), T Lovett (Staffordshire), C Jordan (Lichfield), A Donnelly (CEPOG), A Cowan (Warwickshire), D Carter (Birmingham), M Eade (Birmingham), D Simpson (Solihull), B Phillips (Cannock Chase), L Cowden (Shropshire), P Bayliss (WMRA), M Middleton (Worcestershire), V Popplewell (WMRA), S Preuss (WMRA), D Thew (WMRA), G Poxon (WMRA), S Doak (WMRA), R Hilton (Staffordshire) and R Poulter (WMRA).

Observers: J Russell (Barton Willmore), J Blakey (DfES), M Williets (AWM) and J Blanchard (Worcester News)

Prior to the commencement of the meeting Members were advised that they were not quorum and any decisions made would need to be ratified by the next full meeting of the Regional Assembly in April 2008.

1. Welcome/Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs: L Wanger (Stoke-on-Trent), S Askin (Worcestershire), D Caunt (Dudley), R Tompkinson (Dudley), T Wright (Dudley), M Jones (Warwickshire), B Stevens (Warwickshire), P Bilson

(Wolverhampton), I Lloyd (Nuneaton & Bedworth), R Horton (Sandwell), P Wardle (Staffordshire Moorlands), J Allaway (Shropshire) J Windmill (Solihull), J Hammon (Warwick), S Clee (Wyre Forest), R Studd (Newcastle-under-Lyme) and D Davis (Stafford).

Business Council Members: R Culcheth, J Dolman and M Chambers

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest stated.

3. Notes of the meeting held on 22 October 2007

The notes were **agreed** as a true record subject to the following amendments being made:-

Page 3, second paragraph to read *"A Member of Birmingham City Council..."*

Page 5, last paragraph – remove the word *"CPRE"*

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. RSS General Update Phases 1, 2 and 3

RSS Phase One Revision: The Black Country

Members received a report and a verbal update which advised that a consultation on the Secretary of State's 'Proposed Changes' to the WMRSS Phase One Revision was undertaken between September – November 2007. In response, both the Regional Assembly and the Black Country Consortium welcomed the 'Changes' but jointly suggested that some further words be included to the Transport Section in order to provide a clearer steer on the transport issues facing the Black Country.

Members were further advised that it was felt that Black Country is now firmly fixed in the RSS and the Black Country is leading the way to ensure Black Country Renaissance.

RSS Phase Two Revision

The Phase Two Revision Draft was formally submitted to the Secretary of State on 21st December 2007. Following the submission, a formal 12 week consultation commenced on the 7th January 2008 to 28th March 2008. The suite of submission documents included:-

- a. **The Preferred Option** – incorporating final changes as agreed at the RPP meeting (as subsequently cleared by the Chairs/Vice Chairs) along with minor editorial changes;
- b. **The Draft Implementation Plan** – as agreed at the RPP meeting, this has been edited with more up to date information and supplementary material also incorporated, and has subsequently been signed off by the Chair and Vice Chairs;

- c. **The Sustainability Appraisal** – as previously signed off by the SA Steering Group prior to RPP,
- d. **The Participation Statement** – as submitted to RPP but with an updated Appendix on media engagement;
- e. **All Technical Work** – including short technical background papers on Housing, Employment Land, Centres and Waste to explain the background to the quantified proposals within the Preferred Option,
- f. **An Overview Submission document** – prepared by the Secretariat to summarise the Phase 2 process and signpost the key elements of the submission document;
- g. **A Submission Summary Leaflet** – prepared by the Secretariat to meet the requirements of PPS11.

Members were advised that the submission to the Secretary of State had been made on time and a response had now been received from Baroness Andrews.

Various housing issues had been raised and Officers encouraged discussions with GOWM and their Consultants.

Members were invited to discuss the Phase Two Revision and the following comments were made:-

- Eco Towns are considered a problem as they create over and above the housing figures already programmed. It was stated that Eco Homes cost on average £35,000 more than normal build.
- Members felt that they had reached a difficult compromise regarding the housing figures and that this had now been overturned.
- Members requested assurance that the work done by GOWM would be done so independently. Members were advised that they could not be given this assurance as the work is being commissioned by GOWM for GOWM.
- Paragraph 4 of the report was brought to Members attention as it was felt that the RSS was being undermined. Agreement had been reached to maintain the principles of the RSS and our response would need to make this clear.
- Members expressed their concerns that their boundaries had already been pushed back several times. Further concern was given that extra housing would move into rural areas where there is no funding for infrastructure.
- Members requested that GOWM be asked to share any figures they receive from their consultation.
- Infrastructure is needed i.e. transport and sustainable businesses – Government need to provide support for this – without the necessary infrastructure it won't work.

- There needs to be more assistance with affordable and sustainable housing.

RSS Phase Three Revision

Members were advised that the WMRSS Phase Three Revision commenced on 27 November 2007 with the publication of the Draft Project Plan (copies will be available at the meeting). The document was successfully launched at a public event which was attended by some 150 people from across the West Midlands, ranging from representatives of regional organisations and local authorities to community groups and residents. The public consultation closed on the **18 January 2008**.

The Draft Project Plan identifies the topics to be addressed by Phase Three which cover the following:

- **Rural services:** To identify and prioritise the services that are critical to the sustainability of rural communities, and to identify mechanisms for promoting their provision;
- **Housing:** To identify the number of pitches required for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople;
- **Culture:** To identify and address gaps in the provision of international, national, regional and sub-regionally significant cultural assets;
- **Environment:** To further develop environmental policies in the RSS, including flood risk, air quality, renewable energy and Green Belt;
- **Minerals:** To develop policies on safeguarding mineral resources and the future supplies of construction aggregates and brick clay.

Members were invited to discuss the report and the following comments were made:-

- Concern was raised regarding the timing of Phase Three and the impact of SNR. It was requested that the process continued.
- Concern was raised over greenbelt and environmental issues.
- Members requested that the timing be extended to August/September and were advised that this could be considered.
- Members highlighted the need to have a gas storage facility in the West Midlands. Water/electrical supplies needed to be safe from future flooding.

The report recommended that RPP:

- a. note the Secretary of State's final approval of the WMRSS Phase One Revision – the Black Country (**paragraphs 3.1 – 3.3**)
- b. advise on the approach to be taken by the Assembly in response to the letter received from Baroness Andrews (**paragraphs 4.4 – 4.5**); and
- c. ratify RPE's agreement on the approach to the involvement of S4(4) authorities in the RSS Phase 3 Revision, as set out in **paragraph 5.6**

Members **agreed** the recommendations subject to their comments being included and the ratification of the Regional Assembly.

6. **RSS Annual Monitoring Review**

Members received a report and presentation on the key findings of the February 2008 RSS Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)

The report highlighted changes to the presentation of this year's report.

It was recommended that Regional Planning Partnership:

- a. **note** the key findings of the February 2008 AMR (see Section 5 below);
- b. **support** the changes to the format of this year's report and **confirm** that a printed shortened version of the report containing the Executive Summary should be made available (see para 4.3 below);
- c. **agree** that the document should proceed for printing so that the statutory deadline for publication (29th February 2008) is satisfied.

Members **agreed** the recommendations subject to the ratification of the Regional Assembly.

7. **Sub National Review**

Members received a verbal report from Rose Poulter who highlighted the following:-

- The SNR had been published in July and advised that all Planning work would be handed to the RDA.
- There would be a single Regional Integrated Strategy (RIS) which would sit alongside the RES.
- The RDA would become more strategic and would delegate funding down to Local Authorities and Partnerships
- The Association is having a review to reinforce its Member and Officer structures.
- There would be a Forum of Leaders would engage with AWM and GOWM – West Midlands Strategic Transitional Group which is Chaired by Prof Michael Clarke
- Government are keen that the Regional Assembly operates "business as usual".
- The Assembly budget has been cut by 7% for next year.
- Government will be producing a consultation paper on SNR on 18 February which would explain how the RIS will work.

Members were invited to comment:-

- The Association structure will be crucial. Other regions have already made robust responses and Members requested that the WMLGA look at those.
- There will be a democratic deficit so there would need to be a way to channel information to include other partners.
- Regional Planning Partnership is a very important partnership and needed to be fought for.

8. Conformity Protocol

The RPP were updated on a number of areas of work connected with the Regional Assembly's statutory functions in respect of Conformity:-

Revision to the Conformity Protocol

Conformity role in light of RSS Phase 2 Preferred Option submission

Conformity consultations

Formal Conformity decisions

Saving of Structure Plan Policies

Consultation relevant to Conformity work

The report recommended that Members note the information provided to them in the Report.

Members **noted** the report.

9. Nominations to the Board of Sustainability West Midlands (SWM)

The Chairman advised that he had received 3 nominations to the Board of SWM. At the time of the meeting he had met with two of the volunteers but was still to have discussions with the third. He would advise RPP of his decision once he had contacted the third candidate.

For Information

The following reports were for information only and were **noted** by Members:-

10. **Regional Housing Allocations 2008 – 2011**
11. **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 – Section 40 Duty to Conserve Biodiversity – Report from Natural England**
12. **Home Build – Midlands Show**
13. **Transport Challenge**
14. **AOB**
15. **Dates of Future Meetings:
24 April 2008 – Birmingham and Midland Institute**