

Agenda Item 6

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

23 April 2008

SUB NATIONAL REVIEW CONSULTATION PAPER

**PROSPEROUS PLACES; TAKING FORWARD THE REVIEW OF SUB-NATIONAL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION**

Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose

- 1.1 For information and to update members on the contents of "Prosperous Places"; the government's consultation document, taking forward the Sub National Review (SNR).

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Assembly:
- discuss the issues that the consultation paper raises and agree that the Assembly response is agreed by the Assembly Board meeting on 8 June 2008.

3. Background

- 3.1 The outcome of the government's SNR around economic development and regeneration was published in July 2007 and has previously been considered by the Assembly. The review sets out the government's aspiration to bring a new clarity to regional decision making with a new single regional strategy, an expanded role for RDAs and a stronger role for local authorities in driving economic development at a more local level. The government sees the review as providing "the framework that will enable central and local government and other partners to work together to help maximise prosperity in all parts of England and tackle social deprivation and inequality".
- 3.2 At the time of the publication of the review, the government indicated that it would be publishing a consultation document giving more detail about how it intended to move forward with the recommendations, bearing in mind the reforms set out in the SNR were intended to enable solutions to be tailored at a regional, sub-regional and local level, within a broad national framework.

After some delay from the original timetable, the consultation document, called "Prosperous Places" was published on 31 March 2008. The Executive Summary of the document is attached as Appendix A; members will find the full document on the BERR website (<http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file45468.pdf>). The consultation period runs until 20 June 2008.

- 3.3 At the last Assembly meeting members discussed the transition arrangements that have been set up in the region including the Strategic Transition Group chaired by Professor Michael Clarke (as a non-Executive Director of Government Office West Midlands), and which includes representatives from the Assembly, local government and the RDA. This Board met on 1 April 2008 and received a report which set out an early view of the issues raised by the consultation and the implications for the region and partners. The paper highlighted some of the key discussion points regional partners will need to address, either as part of the response to the consultation document or to take forward the SNR agenda in the region. This paper is attached to this report as Appendix B, and members are directed to this paper for a summary of the issues
- 3.4 The consultation paper emphasises the importance of the RSS completing the current round including further reviews where necessary; particularly emphasising the government's commitment to increased housing numbers and that Regional Assemblies will lead this work. It also suggests that in advance of the new legislation the expectation is that the Assembly and the RDA will be making preparations, together with partners including local government, to the introduction of the single integrated regional strategy. During this period the Assembly will need to ensure that the structures needed to deliver this work continue during the transition period and that capacity is maintained to do this. Although there is no particular date identified in the consultation document for the transfer, it is believed to be likely that March 2010 will be confirmed through legislation as the date when the transfer of powers from Assemblies will happen, although whilst emphasising the need for primary legislation before the transfer of the Regional Planning Body (RPB) function to the RDA can happen, the government has also made provision in the current Planning Bill to empower Regional Assemblies to delegate to the RDA any of their functions relating to the RSS should both parties agree.
- 3.5 It is anticipated that a number of responses to the consultation document may go in from the region and this may include a joint response from the Assembly, local government and the RDA which will cover some of the issues, and the Strategic Transition Board will look at this at its next meeting. However, this will not prevent either the Assembly, or any individual groups or partner organisations putting in their own response. The Assembly Board is due to meet on 18 June 2008 and it is recommended that this will be the appropriate body to sign off the Assembly's final response. To enable more in-depth discussion of some of the issues within the consultation document

and the implications of these, a series of workshops will run on the afternoon of the Assembly meeting on 23 April 2008, and the findings from those workshops will be taken into account in pulling together the Assembly's response.

- 3.6 Members may wish to note that all Government Offices across the regions have been asked to arrange a conference around the consultation document; Government Office West Midlands (GOWM) are arranging for this to take place on the morning of Monday 19 May 2008. Invitations to this event and further details, once these have been finalised, will be sent out by GOWM to local authorities, the business sector and other stakeholder groups. The conference will be attended by the Regional Minister. Senior members of the Assembly have been asked to participate in the discussion.

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