

Agenda Item No. 8(b)

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Board of Directors - Friday 6th October 2006

West Midlands Region – Incorporating A City Region and Sub-Regional Approach

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide input into and consideration of a draft statement which it is intended will be produced jointly by the Assembly, Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region and Stoke City Region.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 To consider and comment on the attached draft statement

3. Background

- 3.1 Over the last 18 months or so the WMLGA and WMRA have been party to discussions on the emerging City Region approaches from Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country and Stoke. WMLGA and WMRA officers & members have expressed mixed views on the City Region approaches being taken.
- 3.2 In January and again in April the Assembly agreed a Statement on its broad support to the City Region approach being developed by Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country and Stoke. In July the Assembly hosted a presentation by the two City Regions and a discussion with Members.
- 3.3 Since the production of the April Statement and the discussion in July the national and regional context has shifted once again. Hints on the contents of the White Paper have not clarified Government's position on City Regions, Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region Away Week-end 1 / 2 September and the Big Debate at the ICC "If City Region is the answer what is the question?" have all served to keep our West Midlands discussions on the City Region approach very much alive.
- 3.4 Although there are differing views on the role and contribution of the City Region approaches, all commentators recognise:-
 - that in some form or another sub-regional working and sub-regional partnerships have always been part of the regional landscape, have a place and will continue to be so.
 - and further that the West Midlands Region needs to present coherent, co-ordinated and consistent messages to local, sub-regional, regional and national about its strategic priorities and agenda.

- 3.5 Whilst the above bullets are essentially uncontested by commentators; there remains a lack of clarity about what the City Region approaches are setting out to achieve and how they will deliver their objectives. This lack of clarity although frustrating to those outside the City Region partnerships, is perhaps inevitable when dealing with a complex agenda and involving partners who have a variety of customers to serve and targets to meet.
- 3.6 To this end the Assembly is working with the Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region and Stoke City Region partnerships to produce a joint statement which:-
- sets out an agreed set of ambitions for the Region and the two City Region approaches,
 - recognises work in progress and
 - identifies where further work is required to ensure any action undertaken by one part of the Region does not have unintended 'disbenefits' for another part of the Region.
- 3.7 The attached draft in appendix 1 is the first step to producing such a statement. It will be discussed at a number of WMLGA, WMRA and City Region member and officer groups between now and 25 October. It is hoped that the statement can be finalised and supported by the Full Assembly meeting on 25 October.
- 3.8 The Statement has a working title of ***West Midlands Region – Incorporating A City Region and Sub-Regional Approach***. This is deliberate. It is hoped that future iterations of this Statement can describe the 'fit' and contribution of other strategic sub-regional arrangements within the West Midlands region.

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**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY in conjunction with
The BIRMINGHAM, COVENTRY AND BLACK COUNTRY CITY REGION
and The STOKE CITY REGION AND NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE CITY
REGION.**

**West Midlands Region – Incorporating A City Region and Sub-Regional
Approach**

Draft Statement Three – October 2006

This Statement is the third on City Regions and represents a step forward in the development of city region work embedded in a strong and balanced region.

The purpose of this Statement is to ensure a better understanding of the City Region approaches, and how they are shaping up to deliver regional strategic priorities, especially their contribution towards the urban renaissance agenda and competitiveness.

Below the strategic framework provided by the Assembly is described; together with the emerging vision/ambitions of 'Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region and Stoke City Region

The West Midlands Regional Assembly.

- West Midlands Regional Assembly is the ***strategic partnership*** for the West Midlands; it aims to bring coherence, unity and prominence to regional issues.
- The Assembly works with and for the ***sub-region partnerships*** and ***sectors*** that make up the totality of the West Midlands region. **Words to be added here.**
- The Assembly believes it is essential to demonstrate to partners, Government and Europe that the West Midlands Region is strong – that the sum of its parts whether ***rural*** or ***urban*** are greater than the whole.
- Therefore the Assembly will continue to involve and work with ***all sectors and parts*** of the Region in its work and continue to expect that all parts of the Region will work to deliver the regional priorities set out in the regional strategies for spatial planning, transport, housing and economic development.

- These strategies reflect our ***shared regional priorities***, they also respect the local distinctiveness of different parts of the region and the inter-dependencies between rural and urban areas. All parts of the region share those objectives and each has a unique role to play in respect to our economy, social fabric and the environment in which we live, work and play. Collectively we are committed to improving our economic performance and quality of life.
- The Assembly believes that we have the opportunity to work closely with sub regional initiatives such as the city regions to ensure the delivery of key regional strategies and priorities. Such initiatives may take place in urban areas, rural areas or work across other sub regional or thematic geographies.

The Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region.

The Birmingham, Coventry Black Country (BCBC) City Region is a sub regional initiative which involves the 8 metropolitan authorities of Birmingham, Coventry, the West Midlands Regional Assembly, the Learning Skills Council and Advantage West Midlands and the Business Community.

It has been formed in response to the historic and continuing economic under performance of the metropolitan urban core of the West Midlands.

The BCBC City Region is preparing Joint Investment Plans (JIPs) for Transport, Skills and Employment, Inward Investment and Marketing, Economic Development and Regeneration, Housing and Culture.

The JIPs will demonstrate how city region working will accelerate key strategic decision making and policy delivery, align funding, create better value for money, leverage additional levels of private finance, and create efficiency through the avoidance of duplication and unnecessary competition.

Implementation of the JIPs will be central to the delivery of the Urban Renaissance component of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy.

The BCBC City Region is committed to ensuring that its activities and interventions will be of benefit to both the metropolitan and non-metropolitan parts of the West Midlands region.

The Stoke and North Staffordshire City Region

Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Staffordshire County Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Staffordshire Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands Council have been exploring ways in which the relationships between the North Staffordshire conurbation and its surrounding area can provide a strategic agenda for social, economic and environmental regeneration. This emerging initiative is being undertaken with the involvement of a wide range of organisations, including the West Midlands Regional Assembly, Advantage West Midlands, the Learning and Skills

Council, universities, Renew North Staffordshire, the North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone and the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Our Joint Commitment to Working

With the latest city region developments we feel that the region and the city regions are now in a position to make a joint commitment to the way in which they will move forward in the future. These commitments will help to ensure a mutual understanding of the intentions of the initiatives, regional unity and support for the role which they play in delivering the urban renaissance we are aiming for. Therefore the **West Midlands Regional Assembly** and the **City Regions** commit to:

1. Working together to develop a greater understanding of the approach to City Regions in the region and to harnessing the benefits which the initiatives can bring to the whole region.
2. Ensuring that the city region initiatives clarify their purpose and objectives and the rationale behind any additional freedom and flexibilities which may be requested. If these are requested then all necessary partners will be engaged, consulted and involved from an early stage.
3. Developing city region policies and interventions that are framed and delivered in the context of the regional strategies and the surrounding towns and rural areas – the wider region; recognising the relevance of city regions and other places to each other and that the strength of these inter-relationship will vary across the Region. Transport, economic development and housing in particular will demonstrate a high degree partnership working with neighbours and regional partners across nominal City Region boundaries in order to reflect the realities of these inter-relationships, to recognise the interdependency of economies of near neighbours and the economic geography of the West Midlands region as a whole.
4. Accountability and/or governance structures which recognise the West Midlands Regional Assembly as the regional strategic partnership representing the West Midlands Region and respects the role of other sub-regional partnerships.
5. Developing new City Region structures which simplify existing sub regional arrangements, and connect to regional arrangements
6. City Regions securing and accelerating delivery against key regional strategies in the Major Urban Areas.
7. City regions and delivery plans which recognise, support and operate within the context of the Regional Assembly's role in determining 'strategic balance' across the Region.

8. Working to maximise opportunities and secure additional resource for delivering economic and population growth in the context of regional strategies and the Governments household growth projections to 2026. New Growth Point proposals will be factored into discussions concerning the delivery of household growth.
9. Undertaking comprehensive sustainability appraisal of Development Plans as they are drafted.
10. In order to demonstrate evidence of success each City Region commits to adopting the following measures:
 - Quicker and better decision making which is accountable to the Region.
 - Improved competitiveness and an increased contribution to improving the overall performance of the West Midlands Region and UK.
 - Better quality of life for those living, working and playing in our urban areas.
 - An urban infrastructure, which functions effectively, supports growth and serves both urban and rural communities with minimum impact on our environment.
 - Reduced development pressure on the Region's rural areas.
 - Reduced pressure for growth on other Regions.