

Agenda Item No. 11

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Assembly Meeting – 18 January 2006

DECISIONS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Report of the Chief Executive and the Regional Partnerships Secretary

1. **Purpose of report**

To advise the Regional Assembly of matters considered by the Board at its meeting on 2 December 2005 which are not otherwise the subject of a report to this meeting. The agenda and accompanying reports are available via the Assembly's website.

2. **Recommendation**

The content of the report be noted.

3. **Background**

The board at its meeting on 2 December considered reports on the following items:

3.1 **Scrutiny and Strategic Review Reporting and Publication Protocol**

The Board **approved** a reporting and publication protocol for Scrutiny and Strategic Reviews.

3.2 **Corporate Governance: Report of the Chief Executive and Company Secretary**

(i) **Half Yearly Financial and Performance Report**

The Board **endorsed** the performance exception report.

(ii) **Expansion of Coventry Airport – Costs of appearing at a public inquiry**

The Assembly had been invited to participate in a public inquiry in respect of the above matter. The estimated cost is £25,000 (representing the costs of both Counsel and the Assembly's expert witness). ODPM had agreed to provide funding to cover half of these costs.

The Board **approved** a virement of up to £12,500 from the Transport budget (strand 22) and agreed to make provision in future years budgets for legal costs.

(iii) **Regional Planning Body – Conformity Role**

The Board recognised that the Assembly's role in determining issues of conformity had become increasingly time-consuming and **agreed** to seek legal advice on varying the existing arrangements for making these determinations.

(iv) **Members' Allowances**

The Board **agreed** the terms of reference for the reconvening of the WMLGA/WMRA remuneration panel.

(v) **RRS Implementation Event**

The Board **supported** the proposals for a high level RSS implementation event to be hosted and sponsored by PriceWaterhouse Coopers.

(vi) **Audit Commission Study – Regional Governance: Is it delivering for Local Government – West Midlands Case Study**

The Board were advised of research into regional governance by the Audit Commission and the selection of the West Midlands as a case study. This was **noted**.

(vii) **High Court Judge Project**

The Board **supported** the efforts being made to see the West Midlands and Birmingham become a national pilot for the permanent relocation of High Court Judges to the region.

(viii) **Regional Energy Advisory Board – Request for Board Member & the position of the Regional Energy Advisor**

The Board **appointed** Councillor Claude Bodenham to serve on the Regional Energy Advisory Board.

3.3 **Employment Matters: Secondment from Home Office**

The Board **welcomed** the secondment of Carmel Kerr from the Home Office to act as lead on equality and diversity. She will take up her role on 17 January 2006.

3.4 **Regional Partnership Secretariat - Integrated Organisational Structure**

A confidential report from the Regional Partnership Secretary seeking agreement to the development of a single integrated management structure to more effectively deliver the objectives of both the WMLGA and WMRA was considered.

Both the WMLGA Executive Committee and WMRA Board have approved the development of fully integrated secretariat support arrangements at the Regional Partnership Centre, involving a single Chief Executive and Senior Management Team. This will replace the

current partial integration model which has operated since April 2004 with separate senior officers for WMLGA and WMRA.

The report considered by the Executive and Board set out the rationale for integration and the efficiency and effectiveness benefits it will bring without prejudicing the discrete roles and governance structures of WMLGA and WMRA. The 'across the board' agreement is a reflection of the synergies between the institutions and the acknowledged need to maximise regional resources for common benefit.

Agreement has also been reached between Worcestershire County Council and WMLGA for an integrated approach to programme management. Worcestershire CC will be the accountable body with the Regional Partnership Centre providing the principal locus of RIEP operations. A new Directorate of Improvement Programmes is being established and will operate within the integrated Regional Partnerships management structure.

The full Regional Partnerships organisation structure is shown in the attached diagram.

The Board noted that the retention of existing governance structures meant there would need to be revised protocols for staff working to these different structures subject to that the Board **agreed**

- (i) That upon the retirement of the existing Senior Director of West Midlands LGA, the Chief Executive of the Regional Assembly assumes managerial responsibility for a fully integrated Regional Partnerships Secretariat, based on the organisation structure and division of responsibilities as outlined in diagram attached to this report.
- (ii) That subject to agreement in principle by the groups / bodies listed above, the WMLGA Resources Panel and the Joint Chairs and Vice Chairs of WMLGA and WMRA give further more detailed consideration to the human resources and financial implications required to implement the new arrangements
- (iii) That the WMLGA and WMRA Strategic / Business Plans and Budgets to be presented to the Assembly and WMLGA for 2006/7 are based upon the new integrated structure and the operational and financial efficiencies that the proposal brings forward

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