

Agenda Item No. 9

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY Assembly Meeting – 16 January 2008

Revision of the Scrutiny and Strategic Review Annual Plan 2007/8

Report of the Regional Scrutiny Manager

1. **Purpose**
To present a revised 2007/8 Annual Plan commencing September 2007.
2. **Recommendation**
That the revised 2007/8 Annual Plan is endorsed.
3. **Background**
 - 3.1 The Strategic Review Group has the responsible for agreeing a forward plan for the scrutiny and strategic review activity to be submitted to the full Assembly for approval. The 2007/8 Annual Plan was endorsed by the Assembly at its last meeting on 24 October 2008.
 - 3.2 At its meeting, following the Assembly on 24 October 2008, the Strategic Review Group re-examined the timescales within the annual plan in light of a request from the Learning and Skills Council to extend the current strategic review of Post 16 Education, Learning and Skills in the Region.
 - 3.3 The Strategic Review Group requested that the resulting revised plan be resubmitted to the Assembly at its next meeting.
4. **Revised Timescales**
 - 4.1 The attached 2007/8 Annual Plan has been amended to reflect the following changes. However members should be aware that additional spillage is possible, primarily due to additional work arising from the scrutiny and accountability elements within the SNR.
 - 4.2 Strategic Review – The Approach to Post 16 Education, Training and Skills – the evidence gathering stage has been extended at the request of the Learning and Skills Council who are funding this piece of work. This will allow input from

an external specialist adviser and consideration of recently announced changes in policy. The final report will now be submitted to the Assembly on 23 April 2008.

- 4.3 Scrutiny Review – Advantage West Midlands Support for Skills – this review cannot commence until the evidence gathering stage of the strategic review of Post 16 Education, Training and Skills has been completed. The evidence gathering stage will now commence in March 2008 with the final report being submitted to the Assembly on 9 July 2008.
- 4.4 Scrutiny Review – Advantage West Midlands’ Role in Marketing the Region - it is not possible to carry out more than one scrutiny review at one time, therefore this review has been postponed until after the planned scrutiny review of Business Link. The Marketing the Region review will therefore commence taking evidence in March 2009 and report to the Assembly in October 2009. This timescale assumes existing scrutiny arrangements will continue in 2009. This will therefore appear in the 2008/9 Annual Scrutiny and Strategic Review Annual Plan.

Dagmar Waller
Regional Scrutiny Manager
Tel no: 0121 678 1054
Email: d.waller@wmra.gov.uk

Appendix 1

West Midlands Regional Assembly Scrutiny and Strategic Review Annual Plan 2007/8

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This plan is intended to detail key scrutiny and strategic review activities to be carried out by West Midlands Regional Assembly during the scrutiny year September 2007 to August 2008. It should be read in conjunction with the Scrutiny and Strategic Review Protocol agreed between the West Midlands Regional Assembly, Advantage West Midlands and Government Office for the West Midlands.
- 1.2 The Assembly's Strategic Review Group will review and report progress in implementing this plan.

2. Process

- 2.1 The plan details indicative timings only. Detailed timescales will be identified as part of the preparation stage of individual activities. All scrutiny and strategic panel reviews comprise of briefing sessions, evidence gathering from partners and a review of outcomes. Where possible case studies will be used to support the process.

3. Scrutiny Review – Advantage West Midlands Support for the Skills Agenda

- 3.1 Aim – to examine how Advantage West Midlands is working with partners to support the skills agenda. In particular it will examine how the actions within the Regional Economic Strategy contribute to regional goals in relation to skills and the effectiveness of and support for the Regional Skills Partnership.
- 3.2 Timetable
- Preparation – February 2008
 - Hearings – March to April 2008
 - Final Report – 9 July 2008

4. Scrutiny Review – Business Link West Midlands

- 4.1 Aim – to assess the effectiveness of the change in provision of business support services in the region
- 4.2 Timetable
- Preparation – June to August 2008
 - Hearings – September to November 2008
 - Final Report – January 2009

5. Strategic Review – The Approach to Post 16 Education, Training and Skills

5.1 Aim - to contribute to the development of partnership arrangements and to the understanding of how skills issues impact across the region in terms of policy areas and geography. This review is to be carried out jointly with the Regional Learning and Skills Council.

5.2 Timetable

- Preparation – February to April 2007
- Hearings – May 2007 to February 2008
- Final Report – 23 April 2008
- Started within 2006/7 scrutiny year and to be completed within 2007/8 scrutiny year

6. Strategic Review – Transport

6.1 Aim – to assess the effectiveness of regional transport activity in contributing to the Region’s success in balancing economic, environmental and society’s needs

6.2 Timetable

- Preparation – April to June 2007
- Hearings – September 2007 to May 2008
- Final Report – October 2008
- Started within 2006/7 scrutiny year and to be completed within 2007/8 scrutiny year

7. Advantage West Midlands’ Annual Report

8.1 As agreed in the Scrutiny and Strategic Review Protocol, Advantage West Midlands’ Chief Executive will provide a verbal annual report to the Assembly in October 2007.

8. Assessment of the Effectiveness of the Regional Concordat

9.1 Aim – to contribute to the development of the next iteration of the Regional Concordat. This will be led by Strategic Review Group Members and will consist of discussions with individual Concordat signatories to identify expectations and views of the Concordat process.

9.2 Timescale

- Preparation – December 2007
- Concordat partner discussions – January to February 2008
- Final Report – April 2008

9. Economic Analysis Project

- 10.1 West Midlands Regional Observatory has been contracted to provide analytical support for to support panel reviews.
- 10.2 In addition the Assembly is contributing to the development of a regional economic modelling tool. It is expected that this will provide empirical data in respect of options that will support the scrutiny process and monitoring of regional strategies. Progress reports will be submitted to Strategic Review Group as appropriate

10. Reporting Process

- 11.1 The Strategic Review Group will submit reports to the Assembly in respect of scrutiny and strategic review activity. Reports will also be submitted to the Assembly Board as required. It will also be responsible for the publication of an Annual Report detailing activities and key outcomes. It is anticipated that this will be circulated to Assembly Members and partners during July 2008

For more information please contact:

Dagmar Waller
Regional Scrutiny Manager
0121 678 1054
d.waller@wmra.gov.uk