

Agenda Item 14

**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
Assembly Meeting – 16 January 2008**

Regional Sustainable Development Framework – Refreshed

Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide the Board with a draft version of the “refreshed” Regional Sustainable Development Framework (RSDF) for endorsement.

2. Recommendation

- 2.2 That the Board **endorses** the refreshed RSDF (attached as Appendix B).

3. Background

- 3.1 The aim of the RSDF is to help people that develop, review and implement strategies, policies and plans in the West Midlands to ensure their work contributes towards a sustainable future for the Region. The Framework is intended to be useful at local and sub-regional level as well as at regional level, and sets out differing approaches depending on whether strategies, policies and plans are subject to statutory Sustainability Appraisal or not.
- 3.2 The latest version of the RSDF (originally published in 2000) was published in July 2006, shortly after the Government’s “Securing the Region’s Futures” (April 2006). Securing the Region’s Futures included guidance for high level strategies (including the RSDF) in the form of “Essential Ingredients” (attached as Annex A).
- 3.3 In September 2006, Defra wrote to all the English regions requesting that they refresh or update their high-level strategy to take into account these essential ingredients. In response to this request, the Regional Assembly, Sustainability West Midlands (SWM), GOWM and AWM wrote to Defra explaining that most of the essential ingredients were already incorporated in the RSDF except for the requirement for indicators to monitor progress. The Region therefore committed to identify a suite of regional indicators aligned to the RSDF objectives (and also linked to the national sustainable development indicators) by the end of 2007.
- 3.4 SWM led the process of updating the RSDF on behalf of West Midlands Concordat Partners – a copy of which is attached as Appendix B.

- 3.5 If endorsed by the Board, the refreshed RSDF will be forwarded to Defra to comply with the regional commitment to update it in accordance with the Essential Ingredients in Securing the Regions' Futures by the 31st December 2007. The refreshed version will also be incorporated in to an interactive web-based version for those wishing to use the Framework.
- 3.6 At its Board meeting on 19th November, SWM further agreed to examine the use and effectiveness of the RSDF early in 2007 and to undertake a more comprehensive update of the document in the light of developing national and regional policy, particularly in relation to climate change. The Board will be kept informed on any future updates to the RSDF.

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Appendix A

“Essential ingredients” on sustainable development for regional high-level strategy / strategies

- **Evidence Base:** The region's current and future challenges are clearly set out based on robust social, economic and environmental data, trends, scenarios or analysis. This includes regional data for the national sustainable development indicators and other regional sustainable development indicators.
- **Stakeholder involvement:** In taking account of these ingredients and preparing high level strategies in the region, regional stakeholders from social, economic and environmental interests and from all sectors are engaged in the process.
- **Integrated Vision:** A shared, overarching and long-term vision for the future of the region is clearly articulated, based on the region's challenges and opportunities, and which integrates the region's social, economic and environmental priorities. The vision is consistent with the national priorities and principles set out in *Securing the Future*.
- **Aims and objectives:** Clear aims and objectives are identified, which will help implement the shared vision for the region's future. These attempt to reconcile strategic issues / conflicts facing the region and move the regional and national headline sustainable development indicators in the right direction. The aims and objectives make the relevant links across regional social, economic and environmental issues and have regard to the priorities and principles in *Securing the Future*. Clear links are made between other relevant regional and local plans.
- **Indicators, actions and targets:** Targets are identified along with accompanying indicators and actions in order to address unsustainable activities / negative trends and meet the region's aims and objectives. Clear links are made to related actions, indicators or targets in other regional or local plans. Actions have owners and timescales identified.
- **Monitoring and reporting:** arrangements are identified for monitoring progress on implementation and for reporting to regional stakeholders and the wider public. Monitoring and reporting arrangements capture the region's contribution to delivering the priorities in *Securing the Future*.
- **Sub regional and local levels:** links are made between the 'ingredients' above and the opportunities offered by sub-regions, city-regions and local Sustainable Community Strategies / Local Area Agreements, to help contribute to national and regional sustainable development priorities.
- **Sustainability appraisal:** A sustainability appraisal has been conducted on the high-level strategy / strategies in line with available best practice.