

NEWS RELEASE



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Assembly welcomes positive assessment of Advantage West Midlands

Advantage West Midlands' positive assessment by the National Audit Office has been welcomed by West Midlands Regional Assembly.

The Assembly has a statutory responsibility for scrutinising Advantage West Midlands and ensuring that its strategies and policies meet the needs of the Region.

The Chairman of the West Midlands Regional Assembly, Cllr David S Smith: commented: "The assessment clearly recognises the extent to which Advantage West Midlands has moved forward. I am pleased that the Assembly's scrutiny role had already identified some of the areas for improvement and that Advantage West Midlands has taken steps to resolve many of these.

"Advantage West Midlands has been criticised in the past because it has to take difficult decisions. I am therefore delighted to be able to congratulate Board Members and officers on this public recognition of its contribution to the Region."

The final report published by the National Audit Office assesses Advantage West Midlands as "Performing Strongly". The score of 20 out of a possible 24 for the Independent Performance Assessment reflects not only the hard work and successes of the Agency but how partners across the Region are working together to address key issues.

The report highlights successes for the Agency including collaborative partnership working that has resulted both in the development of regeneration projects that would not otherwise have happened and a high level of strategic co-ordination at the regional level. Particular praise is given for the way that the Agency responded to the MG Rover crisis.

It also identifies areas for development including improved reporting at the regional level and a more systematic use of evaluation to inform further decision making.

The Assembly will work with Advantage West Midlands to help to develop areas identified in the report and to monitor progress on behalf of the Region.

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Notes to editors:

1. The West Midlands Regional Assembly ('the Assembly') represents a wide range of democratic, social and economic interests throughout the West Midlands region.
2. The Assembly's membership consists of 100 nominated representatives, with 68 members representing the local authority, 16 representing the business sector and 16 representing other economic and social partners.
3. The Assembly provides a platform for organisations to consider matters of common concern including: regional planning, transport, economic prosperity, sustainability, culture and Europe. It also supports regional policy forums and task groups on social inclusion, faith, housing, life long learning/skills, health, rural and community safety/crime reduction.
4. The Assembly works in partnership with Advantage West Midlands (AWM) the regional development agency (RDA), the Government Office West Midlands (GOWM), Regional Action West Midlands (RAWM) the West Midlands Local Government Association (WMLGA) and other regional and local organisations from across the West Midlands region.
5. The Assembly is the Regional Planning Body, and is also responsible for scrutinising the operation of the region's RDA, Advantage West Midlands.
6. For further information, visit our website www.wmra.gov.uk
7. The Independent Performance Assessment was undertaken by the National Audit Office as part of an examination of all 8 English Regional Development Agencies at the request of the Department of Trade and Industry.
8. The final report can be downloaded from Advantage West Midlands' website www.advantagewm.co.uk