

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
Assembly Meeting – 18 July 2007

Regional Policy Partnerships Activity

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Regional Assembly on the current status and activities of Regional Partnerships, established by or working closely with the West Midlands Regional Assembly.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Regional Assembly considers the report.

3. Partnerships

- 3.1 There are a number of Regional Policy Partnerships which are led by or have representation from the Assembly. The following report provides details of current activities and priorities for each of the Partnerships. Additional information regarding past activities and future plans can be obtained from the named officer contact. Appendix 1 provides contact details for all officers that support these partnerships.

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3.2 Planning Partnership and Executive

Chair of Partnership – Cllr Rex Roberts OBE, Staffordshire CC
Officer Contact – David Thew

Purpose - The Regional Planning Partnership, supported by the Planning Executive, carries out the Regional Planning Body function on behalf of the Regional Assembly leading on the development and delivery of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

- Cllr Rex Roberts is the Portfolio holder for Planning and is Chairman of the Regional Planning Partnership and Regional Planning Executive.
- The Regional Planning Partnership (RPP) Chair and Vice-Chairs serve as Ex-Officio members of the Regional Housing Executive (RHE) and the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the RHE will serve as Ex-Officio members of the Regional Planning Executive, to allow for the effective cross-over of Planning and Housing activities in the future.
- The Regional Planning Partnership includes a number of LGA members. This ensures the LGA has a strong voice and vital input into the work streams of the RPP. (see below)

Current Activities:

RSS Revision

Phase One:

Following the 'Examination in Public' which took place in January 2007, the Panel report was published in March. The report fully supports the proposals for the Black Country's renaissance over the next 15 years based on the strategy of focusing new development and investment in key corridors and centres. This includes the designation of Brierley Hill as a new strategic centre (alongside Wolverhampton, West Bromwich and Walsall Town Centres) along with major proposals for developing the whole Black Country area as an 'urban park'. Amongst a number of detailed proposals, the Panel is recommending that strengthened policies are included on climate change, environment, transport and industrial and commercial growth.

The Secretary of State is currently in the process of preparing 'Proposed Changes' to the draft revision. As it currently stands, the 'Proposed Changes' are expected to be published for consultation in August 2007. RPE will receive an update on this matter at the next meeting.

Phase Two

At a meeting of the RPP on 31st May, officers presented the results of the consultation on a range of Spatial Options following which Members provided a strategic steer on the approach that should be adopted to shaping the Preferred Option.

With regard to housing, this included the importance of maintaining the existing Spatial Strategy and particularly the proposed 'step change' in Urban Renaissance, crucial to the Region. Equally, the importance of Rural Renaissance was endorsed and the need to ensure adequate provision of affordable housing in rural areas.

Whilst Members were made aware of the views of different parties with regard to the overall scale of housing provision that might need to be contemplated in the context of recent household projections, no decisions were made on this matter. It was acknowledged, however, that any housing figures for the City Regions should be regarded broadly as 'minima' to reflect their aspirations for growth and that, beyond the Major Urban Areas, growth in housing provision should be considered in those areas where specific growth aspirations have been identified.

With regard to other matters, the following approach was endorsed including

- the need to identify within the RSS a five year reservoir of land at District level and the possible need for additional Regional Logistics Sites;
- the need to consider a possible policy encouraging more office developments to be located within strategic centres rather than in out-of-centre locations
- the need to consider a number of adjustments to current RSS transport policies relating to Park and Ride, car parking standards, demand management and airports
- the need to identify the scale of provision for waste management in the context of decisions on housing distribution.
- the need to factor Climate Change and the Region's ability to adapt and mitigate into the Preferred Option

Following this policy steer, officers will now be developing a Draft Preferred Option for consideration by the RPP at its next meeting on 24th September. This meeting will provide a further opportunity for Members to provide guidance to officers on the development of the Preferred Option – the final version of which will be presented to them for approval on 22nd October.

Phase Three

Members will recall that the issues to be taken forward in Phase 3 include critical rural services, recreational/cultural provision, various regionally significant environmental issues and the provision of a framework for sites for Gypsies and Travellers. In addition Members of the RPP have requested that this includes issues in relation to the environment such as landscape and tranquillity as well as links between the environmental issues earmarked for Phase 3 and the environmental policy and designations (e.g. AONBs) in the existing RSS. As regards the recreation/culture topic, it was suggested that tourism and the visitor economy should be integrated into the revision. In addition, the RSS Task Group has suggested that the built environment should feature more strongly in the Phase 3.

The timetable for the submission of the Draft Project Plan has been revised to take into account the timetable for the Phase 2 Examination in Public. The revised timetable is as follows:

- Draft Project Plan launch – November 2007;
- Final Project Plan launch – April 2008;
- Spatial Options launch – December 2008;
- Preferred Option launch – August 2009.

The Draft Project Plan will be presented to RPE for consideration and endorsement at the next meeting on 24th September 2007. Following this, the Draft Project Plan is to be brought before the RPP for sign-off on 22nd October 2007 and formally launched in November 2007.

Monitoring and Implementation

- The Annual Monitoring Report was published in February 2007.
- A revised monitoring framework is being developed as a component of Phase Two of the RSS Revision. This will take account of latest Guidance and will incorporate new targets and indicators arising from Phase One. Additionally, it will go some way in anticipating Phase 3 monitoring requirements.
- A consultancy study designed to assess the infrastructure requirements of the emerging Preferred Option was let in March 2007. This will:
 - Identify available infrastructure headroom;
 - Identify constraints in respect of a wide range of infrastructure themes and will be used to inform the development of the Preferred Option;
 - Inform and assist the development of a Revised Implementation Plan which incorporate the Phase One Implementation Plan. This will be submitted with the Preferred Option in late 2007.

Conformity

On behalf of the Regional Planning Partnership, the Assembly and the Regional Advisory Group are undertaking a review of the current Conformity Protocol, drawing on the body of experience to date and an estimate of workload for the future. In particular this will clarify the position the Assembly will adopt at Examinations in Public and Public Inquiries. A revised Conformity Protocol will shortly be presented to the Regional Planning Partnership. This will include proposals for the establishment of a Conformity Panel as agreed by the Assembly Board in October 2006.

The Regional Assembly recently made its annual report to Communities and Local Government on its performance against the statutory deadline to respond to planning applications within 21 days or an agreed period in excess of that period. The 2006-2007 year was the first full year of reporting on this matter. The Regional Assembly responded to all of the consultation it received within the statutory deadline.

3.3 Transport Partnership

Chair of Partnership – Cllr Roger Phillips, Herefordshire Council
Officer Contact – Danny Lamb/Cassie Manly

Purpose – To hold policy lead responsibility for transport and to support and advise the Regional Assembly and the Planning Partnership/Executive.

Current Activities:

Funding

RTP continues to monitor the RFA transport programme and provide the DfT with additional advice/comments as and when necessary.

The Government is expected to continue to roll out the RFA process next year - the RTP continues to lead the transport component with regional players.

In advance of the Department for Transport's (DfT) new guidance - expected sometime in 2008 - the RTP has required all scheme promoters to provide them with up to date information on their proposed RFA transport schemes. The first stage in the process (October 2007) is to establish how many schemes will come forward for assessment.

The RTP has agreed that all schemes with at least DfT 'Programme Entry' status will be a firm regional priority (Programme Entry is the

DfT's first step to funding approval, followed by Conditional Approval and then Full Approval).

We anticipate some 40 new or updated transport schemes will be submitted for the RTP to consider. We are in the process of appointing consultants to undertake independent appraisals and to develop a set of 'banded' regional priorities. The consultants' costs will be borne by the promoting authorities.

Regional partners continue to progress their Congestion Transport Innovation Fund investigations.

Delivery

The RTP recently published the 2007 edition of the West Midlands Transport Delivery Plan, which demonstrates the progress made in delivering the transport priorities identified in the Regional Transport Strategy and the RFA. The RTP also monitors the RFA transport scheme spend profiles.

There are some critical issues in this process – particularly the delivery of high cost, multi-funded schemes such as Birmingham New Street station.

Emerging Policy

The transport agenda continues to change – at the national level there is the draft Local Transport Bill, there is at least one transport White Paper expected this year (Long Term Rail Strategy) and other legislation is related e.g. the Climate Change Bill and the Planning White Paper. The Region continues to engage with Government with respect to the Bills and White Papers.

At the regional level we are revising the Spatial Strategy and reviewing the Economic Strategy – there is significant potential for both of these to change current transport policy and priorities.

With respect to the Climate Change Bill and the Stern Report, the Assembly and partners are taking the Climate Change agenda very seriously - this will be reflected in both the Spatial/Economic Strategies and a Regional Action Plan.

Draft Local Transport Bill

The main themes of the draft Bill are:

- Tackling congestion;
- Improving public transport;
- Empowering delivery at the local level;

- Developing the bus through stronger joint working between public and private sectors;
- Strengthening transport strategy and delivery in major urban areas; and
- Supporting the introduction of local road pricing as part of a package of transport improvements

The RTP discussed the draft Local Transport Bill at their meeting on 10th July 2007 and are currently preparing a response to the DfT's consultation (September 2007).

3.4 Housing Partnership (RHP)

Chair of Partnership: Cllr John Lines – Birmingham CC

Purpose – On behalf of the Regional Assembly the aim of the Partnership is to provide leadership, coherence and support to the achievement of the Regional Housing Strategy for the Region and to advise Ministers on housing priorities in the Region.

Current Activities:

Development of the Regional Housing Allocations Strategy 2008-2011

- The Housing Secretariat has supported or hosted a number of regional and sub-regional events as part of the consultation process for the Regional Housing Allocations Strategy. For example, a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Roundtable meeting was held on 4 May 2007, to allow the BME Housing Network and other BME organisations to contribute expert comment on the future needs of BME communities over the lifetime of the next Regional Housing Allocations Strategy (2008 – 2011)
- The Housing Secretariat supported an event hosted by the National Housing Federation on 30th March 2007, to consult with Registered Social Landlords, etc on the Regional Housing Allocations Strategy
- A meeting of the Regional Housing Partnership was held on 6 June 2007, at which Members were presented with a final draft of the Regional Housing Allocations Strategy 2008 – 2011 for comment and were provided with details of the approach to be adopted in the development of a Preferred Option for the Phase Two Revision of the RSS
- A meeting of the Regional Housing Executive was held on 14 June 2007, at which Members were asked to approve the final draft of the Regional Housing Allocations Strategy 2008-2011 and Pro-Forma on

spending priorities of the Region for submission to CLG on 28th June 2007

- The Housing Secretariat have continued to work with the Sub-Regional Housing Market Areas to develop their sub-regional Housing Investment Strategies. These strategies heavily influenced the shaping of the Regional Housing Allocations Strategy 2008-2011

Gypsies and Travellers

- At the Regional Housing Executive meeting on 14th June 2007, Members received recommendations on the bids submitted to Round Three of the Gypsy and Traveller Site Grant Programme. The recommendations resulted from the Housing Secretariat undertaking a Regional appraisal of each of the bids, following a more general appraisal conducted by CLGs own consultants. The RHE's advice was then submitted to CLG
- The Housing Secretariat continued to provide support to the six Sub-Regional Housing Market Area Partnerships and will track the progress of their Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessments (GTAA's), to ensure they are completed by the CLG deadline of the end of December 2007
- A Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) Workshop held on 27 April 2007, at which a Consultant from CURS/University of Birmingham provided Local Authority Officers with guidance in terms of undertaking their GTAA's and in an attempt to ensure a consistent approach across each of the Assessments
- The Housing Secretariat is working with CURS/University of Birmingham in connection to the Accommodation needs of Travelling Show People, which once finalised will contribute to the GTAA outcomes and provide a more complete view of the needs of travelling communities

Other activities – Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two revision

- The Housing Secretariat has continued to work with the Planning Team to support the development of a Preferred Option for the Phase Two Revision of the RSS and to feed in the housing issues raised by the Regional Housing Advisory Forum and the Regional Housing Partnership

Other activities - Health

- The Housing Secretariat has engaged with the work of the Health Partnership in its development of a Regional Health and Wellbeing Strategy and will contribute to the Housing and Health chapter, which focuses on Decent Homes and Fuel Poverty

3.5 **European and International Partnership**

Chair of Partnership – Cllr Sir Albert Bore, Birmingham City Council
Officer Contact – Esther Knight

Purpose: To provide the West Midlands with the means of agreeing a single, coherent, cross sector voice on European policy issues of importance within the region. It also provides wider policy context for the work of West Midlands partners and the West Midlands in Europe office in Brussels.

Current Activities:

The EIAP has considered and responded to the WMRA Strategic Review of regional European working.

The Review makes eleven recommendations, with deadlines from June 2007 to June 2009 relating to:

- (I) The strategic Direction of European working
- (II) The level of resources within the region for European working
- (III) The need to simplify structures
- (IV) The need to integrating EU work across all of the regional assembly policy areas
- (V) The need to engage elected representatives – MEPs and CoR members – more effectively.

In view of the far reaching nature of the recommendations, the assembly has appointed Prof Michael Clarke of Birmingham University to lead a project board to take forward all of the recommendations.

On 29th June the EIAP considered a report addressing the initial task, that of setting the strategic direction for European working within the region. This will build on existing Regional strategies. Four priorities are being proposed, to look at the regional response and contribution to:

- The single market
- Technology and innovation
- Global warming
- Social cohesion

This will be consulted on widely, during September and October 2007.

The annual European event will take place this year on September 21st, at the Lighthouse in Wolverhampton, with a Lifelong learning theme, entitled 'How what you know shapes your life', from the OECD publication of the same title. Further information can be obtained from l.chilton@wmlga.gov.uk

3.6 Health Partnership

Chair of the Partnership – Cllr Steve Eling, Sandwell MBC
Officer contact – Zena Lynch

Purpose – to work in partnership to address health inequalities, ensure better health and to improve quality of life within the West Midlands.

Current Activities:

Over Ninety delegates attended the consultation event for the Health and Well-being Strategy, held at Austin Court on the 21st May. Delegates were asked to complete a form to state how they believe they would be able to help with delivery and implementation of the strategy and this work will inform the action planning. Results of all of the workshops are available on the WMRA website.

Responses to the consultation on the draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which ended on the 11th July, are currently being collated and feedback on the results of consultation will be given over the next couple of months. The revised strategy and implementation plan is due to be published in January 2008.

Rural, sustainability and equality and diversity proofing of the draft Health and Wellbeing strategy have been carried out and the findings and recommendations published on the WMRA website.

A technical annex to the draft regional Health and Wellbeing Strategy, produced by the Public Health Observatory, is now also available and has also been placed on the website.

The outcome of the stage 2 bid to the Big Lottery Fund Well-Being programme entitled 'Living Well in the West Midlands' (for ££6.82 million) led by the West Midlands Regional Health Partnership, will be announced on the 18th July 2007.

NHS West Midlands has recently issued their draft strategy for the NHS across the West Midlands area, for public consultation, entitled 'West Midlands Strategic Framework – Investing for Health 2007-2012.' The consultation for this document runs from July – October 2007. The Regional Health Partnership will be preparing a response to this consultation.

The Regional Health Partnership has prepared response to the RES consultation. The final version of the response will be placed on the WMRA website.

The Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP) are encouraging organisations in the West Midlands to sign up to the West Midlands Charter for Mental Health and Well-being. The Charter sets out how individuals, communities and organisations can benefit from, and contribute to mental health promotion. It encourages and inspires organisations to play their part in promoting mental health and well-being in the region. For more information visit www.westmidlands.csip.org.uk or e-mail kate.ohara@csip.org.uk.

3.7 Environment Partnership

Chair - Cllr Keith Austin, Borough of Telford and Wrekin Council
Officer Contact - Chris Blakeley

Purpose – To support and advise the Assembly on Environmental Issues and move forward the implementation of key policy areas.

Current Activities:

- Production of the consultation draft of the Regional Climate Change Action Plan (report at this meeting);
- Incorporating the work of five additional environmental projects into the RSS Phase 2 process, including the first carbon scoping of the WMRSS options, the screening stage of the European Habitats sites across the region and the region's first Regional Flood Risk Appraisal. Two additional waste projects are also being used to produce the first integral RSS Regional Waste Strategy.
- Response have been prepared and submitted to the Regional Assembly response to the WMES ;
- Work on phase 1 of the Landscapes for Living project has been completed and a second phase to develop a new regional "ecosystem" approach to biodiversity across the region will contribute into the WMRSS phase 3 revision;
- A WMRSS Phase 3 working group has prepared the Quality of the Environment contribution to the WMRSS Phase 3 Project Plan;
- A draft response has been prepared to the Regional Health and Wellbeing Strategy consultation;
- A further £171,000 has been secured for the region on two sites through the SITA biodiversity programme as part of the delivery of the Regional Biodiversity Strategy;
- The Chair lead the Regional Biodiversity Conference.

- Two water capacity studies on water resources and water supply infrastructure and water quality and waste infrastructure have been completed. These will be used to inform the RSS Infrastructure Review report
- Work on climate change will enable the WMRSS process to integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation into policy development and prepare regional trajectories for measuring performance.

3.8 **Equalities and Diversity Partnership**

Chair – Cllr Jo Jones, Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council

Officer Contact – Carmel Kerr

Current Activities:

Best Practice in Work-Life Balance for Disabled People Event

On 1st May 2007 an event was held to provide an opportunity for representatives from organisations across the Region to contribute to the development of the Best Practice in Work Life Balance for Disabled People Handbook which will seek to capture and highlight examples of Best Practice across a range of sectors. This event was held in partnership with the Institute of Social Engineers who were responsible for producing the draft document

Regional Health and Wellbeing Strategy

On May 17th 2007 an Equality and Diversity Partnership event was held in partnership with Sustainability West Midlands as part of the consultation process for the production of the Regional Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The views raised at this event were fed into the wider consultation process and presented to the 19th June Equality and Diversity Partnership Meeting.

Equality and Diversity and the WMES Review

The Equality and Diversity Partnership held an event on 13th June 07 to look specifically at how the document addresses regional equality and diversity issues. Representatives from across the public, business and voluntary and community sectors were in attendance and the issues raised at the meeting were fed into the wider WMRA response to the WMES Review.

Regional Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans Event

Over 60 representatives attended a regional event at Government Office for the West Midlands on 29th June 07 to discuss the barriers to LGB and T people in accessing goods and services and how some of these barriers could be overcome. The speakers, including Michael Cashman MEP, Roger McKenzie, Regional Secretary of the

Midlands TUC, Steve Ball, Chair, Birmingham Pride Community Trust and Jenny Brett, Chair, Gender Matters, provided an excellent background to workshop discussions raising both the national policy context and some of the issues affecting these communities in our Region. The event raised some important questions which will be fed into a post-event report which will be considered at the next Equality and Diversity Partnership meeting to see what progress can be achieved at a regional level.

LGA Conference Fringe Event: EU Equals

An Equality and Diversity Partnership event took place as a fringe activity to the main LGA conference on 5th July 07. The event looked at the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. This Charter is closely linked with the Council of Europe's Charter of Local Self-Government of 1985 and looks to regional and local governments to use their powers and partnerships to achieve greater equality for their people. Speakers included Michael Cashman MEP and Colin Robertson, Gender Matters.

3.9 **Sustainable Development Partnership (Sustainability West Midlands)**

Chair of Partnership – George Marsh

Officer Contact – John Sharpe / David Clarke

Purpose – Sustainability West Midlands (SWM) is the regional champion of sustainable development and the Assembly's independent advisory partnership on sustainable development. SWM aims to achieve a more sustainable region by developing a continually improving link between sustainable policy and sustainability in practice.

Current Activities:

SWM are promoting "Planning for Sustainable Homes: Meeting The Low Carbon Challenge" (available at www.sustainabilitywestmidlands.org.uk/shap/shap0607) which illustrates best practice in planning for low carbon homes, and have been promoting use of the guide through practitioner workshops.

Other SWM activities include development of the Climate Change Adaptation and Impacts Partnership, the Social Capital Equality and Diversity (SCED) programme and responding to the draft Regional Economic Strategy. SWM also continue to engage with other Assembly Policy Partnerships through their Ambassadors.

3.10 **Cultural Partnership (Culture West Midlands – The Regional Cultural Consortium)**

Chair of Partnership – Cllr Chris Saint, Stratford-on-Avon DC

Officer Contact – Alex Angus

Purpose - Culture West Midlands is one of eight Regional Cultural Consortia in England and is the cultural 'mouthpiece' for the West Midlands, ensuring that culture and creativity get a fair hearing across the region. It has four main areas of responsibility strategy development, advocacy, advisory, identifying and brokering links.

Recent Activities of Culture West Midlands and the Regional Cultural Forum

Liaising closely with the West Midlands Regional Assembly and Advantage West Midlands to secure the appropriate cultural input into the Regional Spatial Strategy Revision and the Review of the Regional Economic Strategy.

Following an agreement between LOCOG and DCMS it was agreed that each of England's eight regions outside London could appoint its own 'Creative Programmer' who would help provide a dynamic link between the regions and London's 2012 organising committee. Culture WM led the recruitment process and are hoping to announce the appointment of a West Midlands 'Creative Programmer' in the near future.

In conjunction with the West Midlands LGA, Culture West Midlands hosted a national workshop for the 'Lifting the Burdens Task Force' which formed part of an independent review into the burdens that DCMS places on local government. The WMLGA co-ordinated a regional response to the 'call for evidence' and CWM facilitated the workshop event.

Portfolio Holder Update - Cllr Chris Saint

The first of a series of 'London 2012: Ask the Team' meetings took place in Birmingham on 25th June 2007. Tessa Jowell and Seb Coe were joined on stage by Councillor Chris Saint, (Chair of the West Midlands Leadership Group for 2012 and also the Region's representative on the Nations and Regions Group), Olympic heptathlon gold medallist Denise Lewis and Sir Roy McNulty, acting chairman of the Olympic Delivery Authority.

The new brand and vision for the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games was launched on 4th June 2007 by Sebastian Coe and a team of London 2012 ambassadors. Local partners will also be able to be associated with the Olympic brand through events.

Business opportunities arising from the Olympic Games are being promoted in the Region through a series of 'Prepare for 2012'

workshops being run by AWM and the West Midlands Business Council.

Organisers of the 2012 London Olympics have launched a 27-stop summer roadshow, focussed on giving visitors the chance to try out new sports. Events in the West Midlands will be held on 5th August in Stafford and on 26th August in Coventry at the UK School Games.

Following a re-structuring, Tourism West Midlands is now the single, official lead for tourism in the Region. Future key activities are set to include a review of the Visitor Economy Strategy and the establishment of a Branding and Marketing Strategy. As a member of the new board, Cllr Chris Saint will continue to explore and clarify the key issues surrounding these new working practises.

Cllr Chris Saint will continue to keep a watching brief on activities surrounding; Partners for England/Visit Britain, West Midlands 2012 Training Camps, The Review of the Regional Economic Strategy and the potential impacts/scenarios that may emerge from the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.

3.11 Rural Partnership (Regional Rural Affairs Forum)

Chair of Partnership – Rev'd Nick Read

Officer Contact – Sara Roberts

West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum:

The Forum met at Elmeley Castle, Pershore on 08 June holding a specialist seminar after the meeting on Access to Services. The occasion was used to draw up a regional perspective on the outcomes and findings of the Shropshire Rural Pathfinder, to support the work currently being carried out by AWM on Rural Accessibility to Services, and to be introduced to the forthcoming RSS Phase III Revision on critical rural services.

The next meeting is scheduled for 13 September at Ludlow Football Club with the specialist seminar centred on Tourism. The Annual Conference on Sustainable Rural Communities will be held in November.

Rural Proofing:

Together with Rural Accord Partners the Rural Affairs Forum have pioneered the work on rural proofing:

1. Draft West Midlands Economic Strategy

A workshop was held on Wednesday 20 June at the Regional Partnership Centre, in order to produce a structured Rural Proofing Report – Rural Perspectives on the Consultation Draft – and has been submitted to the authors of the Strategy. The process was facilitated by Alison McLean Consulting and the outputs have been further used to mould the West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum

corporate response which has been drafted and circulated to WMRAF members.

2. Regional Health & Well-Being Strategy

Following the submission of the Rural Commentary appraising the West Midlands Health and Well-Being Strategy to ensure that the drafting process includes the best possible practice in terms of “rural proofing”, the WMRAF Consultation Response has now been prepared and formally submitted.

3. Regional Spatial Strategy

The Rural Proofing Sub-Group are currently examining the initial drafts of emerging policies for RSS Phase Two Revision – Developing the Preferred Option prior to the proposed consultation event on 26 July.

Cross Border Working Group

A meeting with our Welsh counterparts has been held, adopting proposals that had been prepared identifying the way forward and highlighting the practical steps required in order to achieve effective cross border collaboration between Central Wales and the West Midlands on both policy development and service delivery. A further meeting is anticipated in September but meanwhile Task Groups for the priority areas are being set up.

Consultation Response

The Rural Renaissance Working Group has prepared the Assembly’s response to the SPARSE (Sparsity Partnership for Authorities Delivering Rural Services) Consultation Paper on Sustaining Rural Communities.

Appendix 1

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