

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL FUNDING ADVICE – ROUND 2

Briefing Note Three

January 2009

This is the third in a series of Briefing Notes on Regional Funding Advice. Government has asked all regions to submit 'Regional Funding Advice' against indicative budgets for economic development, transport and housing and regeneration for the period up to 2018-19. Regional Funding Advice (RFA) will cover public investment in the region of £1bn per year and must be submitted by the end of February 2009 and be no longer than 35 pages.

Following the initial advice of the 'shadow' Joint Strategy and Investment Board [13 November] on the parameters of the RFA document (contained in Briefing Note Two) the JS&IB's meeting on 12 December discussed the emerging approach to the document. Some key points from the discussion were as follows:-

- RFA must focus on growth and renewal and the alignment of activity to achieve this. It must give confidence to Government that the regional partners can deliver.
- Need to manage the message of RFA in terms of regional reputation – delivery is key; and responding to the current economic circumstances – look for opportunities to accelerate projects.
- RFA should briefly describe the role of JS&IB and RFA Advisory Group and the rigour applied to the development of RFA.
- A Regional Infrastructure Fund offers the opportunity to give greater flexibility to the way the region manages its funds. The case for such a fund will be incorporated in RFA.
- The link between Regeneration Zones Impact Investments must be clear and complementary.
- RFA will include an element of over programming – circa 30 – 40%.
- Stoke has a special set of circumstances that must be reflected. The geography of Stoke in relation to surrounding local authorities needs to be clarified.
- RFA provides an opportunity to look at procurement issues, including clauses to promote the use of local labour and local sourcing of projects.
- Need to explore a consistent regional framework for programme management/development, delivery and monitoring.
- The quality of information will be the key to a credible submission. To this end key project activity to be tested for deliverability at a 'Scrutiny' event on 9 January 2009, to inform JS&IB on 16 January 2009.
- Need to have a clear set of propositions in RFA in respect to flexibilities around funding streams and investments, these to be ready to discuss with Regional Minister on 16/1/09 JS&IB.

In relation to the second last Bullet, above, work in December focussed upon identifying some 20 Impact Investment Locations where there are a number of economic / transport / housing planned investments in one location. Information on these projects could be used in the RFA to demonstrate real, local-level integration between the themes of the RFA.

On behalf of the JS&IB the RFA Advisory group examined the integration and deliverability of projects in 10 of these locations [plus rural housing; and transport] at a day-long scrutiny session on 9 January. We are most grateful to partners for participating in these discussions. The outcome will be reported to the JS&IB. Among the RFA advisory group there was unanimity that the process was the right thing to do, both for the RFA itself – in enabling a view to be taken on the likely delivery of projects in key locations - and with a clear value beyond it.

The process of drafting the RFA document is now underway, based upon the advice from the JS&IB meetings in November and December and the outcomes of the Scrutiny session. Significant high level budget and programme information is obtained from AWM, Regional Housing Partnership and Regional Transport Partnership, and the document must identify integration between them [and skills] where appropriate. The detail of Impact Investment Locations must also be weaved into the document – to demonstrate local project integration as part of comprehensive economic development and regeneration activity.

The next meeting of the JS&IB on 16 January will take stock of progress on the work.

The partners leading the development of the RFA submission - AWM, Local Government, West Midlands Regional Assembly, Highways Agency and the Homes & Communities Agency – have arranged a regional briefing on 19 January 2009, 10.00 – 12.00 at the Lakeside Conference Suite, Aston University to update partners on how the RFA is shaping up. If there are any last minute attendees please contact lisarobinson@advantagewm.co.uk

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