

Agenda Item 4a

**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
25 April 2007**

**DRAFT DECISION NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REGIONAL
ASSEMBLY HELD ON 17 JANUARY 2007**

Chairman: Cllr David S. Smith (Lichfield)

1. Apologies and Attendance

The attendance is attached as Appendix 1

2. Members' Disclosures of Interests

Roger Trotman (Business Council) declared that he was a Non-Executive Director of Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust.

3. Chairman's and Vice-Chairs' Reports

Cllr David S Smith (Chairman) referred to the publication in late October of the Local Government White Paper.

Roger McKenzie (WMRA Board Member – Other Stakeholders Group) referred to the following points during his report:

- Expressed the thanks of Valerie Broom (WMRA Vice Chair) for all the good wishes received from Assembly members during her current illness. Valerie hoped to be able to return to work and to continue her WMRA commitments within the next few months.
- On behalf of the wider Other Stakeholder Group, Roger expressed concerns about their representation on groups being established e.g Regional Partnership Review Group; City Region Executive Board. It was emphasised that the Other Stakeholder Group was keen to play an active role across all the WMRA activities and should therefore be properly represented.

Dr Sarindar Singh Sahota (Vice-Chair – West Midlands Business Council) referred to the following points during his report:

- Welcomed Barrie Williams (EEF), the new Chairman for the WMBC to the meeting.

4. **DRAFT Decision notes of the meeting held on 25 October 2006 and Matters Arising**

The notes of the meeting on 25 October 2006 were **agreed** as a true record.

Matters Arising

Item 8 – Living Landmarks Big Lottery (p.6/7)

Mike Cherry (Business Council) asked what, following the reduction in funding from DEFRA to organisations such as British Waterways, were the likely ramifications to the region?

In response the Chief Executive stated that the WMRA had not been made aware of any direct implications to the region from the reduction in funding but would take up the issue following the meeting and report back appropriately.

5. **Draft Budget and Business Plan**

The Assembly was presented with the Draft Budget and Business Plan for 2007/08 which was a more concise document than in previous years, in line with guidance from Communities (DCLG). Members were advised that Communities had requested that the WMRA indicate estimated expenditure and activities for 2008-09 and 2009-10 under the following scenarios:

- Flat Cash Budget (no change)
- Budget reduced by 2.5%
- Budget increased by 2.5%

The Assembly **agreed** to endorse the Draft Budget and Business Plan for 2007/08

6. **Scrutiny and Strategic Review**

The Assembly was provided with a report which outlined the proposed Scrutiny and Strategic Review Annual Plan for 2006/07 which had been agreed by the Strategic Review Group.

The Assembly **agreed** to endorse the Scrutiny and Strategic Review Annual Plan for 2006/07.

Cllr Bodenham requested an update on the outcomes of the Strategic Review AWM's Rural Renaissance which was undertaken during 2005/06.

The Chief Executive stated that AWM had received all the recommendations of the Strategic Review on Rural Renaissance and had agreed to take all on board, with the exception of one which related to the rural proofing of strategies. Whilst this was disappointing, in reality, the impact of the rejected recommendation has been incorporated into AWM's working arrangements, therefore the impact of the scrutiny process has been, and continues to be very effective.

7. *Government Consultations – Regional Responses*

(a) West Midlands Regional Assembly Input into Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration

The Chief Executive outlined the context behind this item, the theme of which related to the raising of awareness and discussions across many levels of Government and its Departments of issues relating to regional working and delivery, especially in the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007. The West Midlands region had a successful history of collaborative working, not least in the development of the Regional Concordat and the establishment of the Regional Forward Planning Executive. It was stated that there was a need to have a debate as to how the region could best use its different partners to deliver effectively as the region moved forward.

In discussion the following comments and points were made:

It was stated that the term sub-national was being used within some recently published Government consultation documents, most notably the Eddington Transport Study, although the Study did not formally define the term. As no formal definition existed it was assumed that the term referred to any structures that lay below the National structures, such as regional or sub regional areas. It was emphasised that currently it was a term of art, not of science.

Brian Summers (Board Member - Business Council) advised the Assembly that, when considering Transport issues, a clear message needed to be given to Eddington that such issues were broader than those solely of the region. A discussion was required to outline the key messages about how the region wanted to / and should work beyond the immediate conurbation.

Chris Crean (Other Stakeholders) posed the question – Why was there no overarching Regional Spatial Strategy for England? If such a strategy existed it could assist in alleviating some regional cross border issues and help in informing the process within all regions.

Pat Fairclough (Other Stakeholders) requested whether the Assembly

had any information regarding the proposals to establish parish councils in cities. Cllr Tilsley stated that within Birmingham City Council an urban parish had been established in Frankely and that there were moves to create a parish in Castle Vale.

Elizabeth Newman (Board Member – Other Stakeholders) stated that there would be a need for Assembly members to further discuss the issue in detail and provide for an opportunity to feed into any debate or consultation

In response to the above comments, the Chief Executive stated that:

- Parish councils were referred to in the White Paper on Local Government published in October 2006 and that an implementation plan was expected to be published within the next few months.
- A number of organisations within the region would need to be engaged in the debate and their views sought. The Assembly would circulate a paper seeking views and feedback.

(b) Lyons Inquiry into Local Government – Promoting Economic Prosperity

Rose Poulter, Director of Policy presented a report which outlined a draft response to the 'Lyons Inquiry into Local Government – Promoting Economic Prosperity'. The Assembly was advised that the submission sought to respond to the issues posed by the Lyons Inquiry based not only on recent experience of the existence of the Assembly, but drew also on the wider active approach of local government working with partners at a regional level over 25 years.

Nick Paul requested the inclusion of reference to the Regional Economic Strategy in paragraph two of Appendix 1 as one of the illustrations of developing regional and sub-regional working.

Members considered the report and **agreed** to endorse the submission of the Lyons Inquiry subject to the above inclusion.

8. Regional Health and Well Being Strategy

Cllr Steve Eling, Acting Chair of the Health Partnership advised Members of the Assembly of the imminent publication of the consultation draft of the Health and Well Being Strategy. He outlined the priorities as outlined in the draft strategy which would be finalised at a meeting of the Health Partnership the following week. The strategy would consider broader issues which affect people's health and wellbeing such as access to transport, good housing and economic issues and seek to determine how the wider region can enhance the communities that the Assembly serves and represents.

It was emphasised that the Health and Wellbeing Strategy was not about NHS service delivery, but would seek to influence, complement and support the NHS West Midlands delivery plan. The document would be cross cutting and was heavily evidence based having used information sources from the Public Health Observatory

The consultation period would last for three months. Cllr Eling encouraged all the Assembly's partners to consider how their organisation could use the strategy, which was designed as a tool to help drive regional priorities. He stated that he was proud that the West Midlands had a comprehensive strategy.

It was recognised that whilst the headline priorities had been circulated at the meetings, Members had not received the full consultation draft, however Members' comments would be welcomed and would be fed into the final iteration of the draft.

In discussion the following points (not otherwise in the draft consultation) were raised:

- Accessibility of local services is crucial for the well being of individuals and communities, e.g post offices, leisure services.
- The strategy needed to encompass appropriate measures to ensure adequate rural proofing.
- Consideration should be given to issues relating to work/life balance and health and safety
- Procurement should be considered as a priority
- As a region the West Midlands has a good track record in producing strategies, however there is a need to ensure that the Health and Wellbeing strategy effectively relates to other regional strategies.
- The consultation draft needed to define clearly how the Strategy would be implemented and monitored

Cllr Eling thanked Members for their contribution. He emphasised that it was not for the regional strategy in itself to deliver, but it needed to provide an effective framework for delivery partners. It was acknowledged that the strategy could and possibly should be the subject of a future scrutiny review by WMRA. The consultation would be an interactive process with additional information available from the web. In his final comments, Cllr Eling encouraged all to participate and respond to the consultation process

Members **noted** the content of the report, endorsed the principles of the consultation draft as outlined, and requested that the comments as noted above be considered prior to final publication of the draft consultation document.

9. Revision of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and the Review of the West Midlands Economic Strategy

The Assembly was presented with a paper which sought to; provide an update on the current progress in revising the WMRSS and in

reviewing the WMES; demonstrate the effective linkages between both processes, and indicate the processes which would be undertaken to develop the Regional Assembly's response to the two consultations. The Assembly was further requested to give consideration to the consultation documents for the WMRSS options and the WMES Choices. A further opportunity for discussion would be available following the Assembly meeting as the revision of the WMRSS and the WMES would be the subject of the Assembly's afternoon conversation.

In discussion the following issues were made:

- Spatial issues were not well considered in the RES.
- The sub regional effect on a RES needed to be considered.
- A major missing issue in the key linkages sections (para 6.3 and Annex A) was broader infrastructure e.g energy, utilities etc. Under Annex A – infrastructure / accessibility solely refers to the reduction in the need to travel, however the West Midlands requires expenditure on roads and public transport. A re-emphasis was required in the manner that this issue was expressed.
- With relation to the evidence base for the WMRSS and the WMES (para 6.2), what were the mechanisms by which they linked with local authorities and local development framework strategies?
- By ensuring the alignment of the WMRSS and WMES processes could this give rise to conflict?
- Could assurances be given that the public consultation would have integrity and have a bearing on RSS.

In response, the Director of Policy assured the Assembly that the consultation process was genuine with local authority colleagues across the region assisting with local consultation processes. A large number of responses were expected together with a cross section of views. In relation to the joint evidence base, much information had been sourced through WMRO and at the early stages of the information gathering process, data from local authorities had been pooled.

Assembly Members were advised by the Chief Executive that the WMRSS had received publicity from press and media across the region and had featured on the Politics Show.

Nick Paul, Chairman of AWM noted the comments raised during the discussion.

The Chairman reminded Assembly colleagues that the consultation process was an open and clear process with the region discussing and allocating issues such as housing allocation in an effective strategic manner providing solutions for the region as a whole as opposed to

the previous system of Government imposition.

Members of the Assembly **noted** the content of the report and WMRA members were encouraged to promote the consultation.

10. **Climate Change – Next Steps**

The Assembly was informed of the steps being taken in response to the climate change challenge following its Annual Conference and the last Assembly meeting in October 2006.

The Assembly **noted** the steps being taken and agreed the following:

- (a) The first draft of the Action Plan to be considered at the next meeting of the Assembly on 25 April 2007.
- (b) The Climate Change Task Group membership to be circulated to sectoral groups
- (c) The need to consider and link in with several business sector issues and pick up good practice e.g buildings and development; housing and transport; planning requirements and emissions.

11. **Incorporating a City Region Approach**

The Assembly was provided with a brief update report on city Region activity with which was appended the Birmingham, Black Country and Coventry City Region 2020 Vision Statement.

Members received and **noted** the report and Vision Statement and requested to be advised of any progress at future meetings.

12. **Regional Policy Partnership Activity**

The Assembly meeting was updated on the current status and activities of Regional Partnerships, established by or working closely with the West Midlands Regional Assembly.

Members **noted** the content of the report.

13 **Decisions of the Board of Directors**

Members were advised of matters considered by the Board at its meeting on 8 December 2006 which were not otherwise the subject of a report to the meeting.

The Assembly **noted** the contents of the decisions of the Board of Directors

14. **Dates of Future meetings:**

Members were asked to note the dates of future scheduled meetings:

Wednesday, 25 April 2007 – Staffordshire County Council

Wednesday, 18 July 2007 – Venue TBA

AOB RAF Cosford

The Chairman advised the Assembly that during the meeting, a formal announcement had been made by Government that the new defence training centre contract from the Ministry of Defence would be established in RAF St Athan in South Wales and not in RAF Cosford, Shropshire. The Regional Assembly **passed a resolution** expressing its deep disappointment at this announcement.

**West Midlands Regional Assembly
Attendance – 17 January 2007**

Cllr P Tilsley	Birmingham
Cllr A Bore	Birmingham
Cllr A Matchet	Coventry
Cllr K Taylor	Coventry
Cllr A Millward	Dudley
Cllr S Ali	Dudley
Cllr D S Smith	Lichfield
Cllr J Cookson	Redditch
Cllr S Eling	Sandwell
Cllr S Smith	Sandwell
Cllr G E Richards	Solihull
Cllr N Davies	Solihull
Cllr C Bodenham	South Shropshire
Cllr B Edwards	South Staffordshire
Cllr D B Price	Stafford
Cllr R Roberts	Staffordshire
Cllr C Saint	Stratford on Avon
Cllr J Oates	Tamworth
Cllr I Fletcher	Telford and Wrekin
Cllr M Begg	Warwick
Cllr M Heatley	Warwickshire
Cllr M Jones	Warwickshire
Cllr R Hyde	Warwickshire
Cllr E Tucker	Worcestershire
Cllr A Steel	Wychavon

Assembly

E Newman	OSG
Peter Shirley	OSG
Howard Farrand	OSG
Pat Fairclough	OSG
Chris Creen	OSG
Roger McKenzie	OSG
Richard Quallington	OSG
John Hall	OSG
F Mitchell	WMBC

Jane Yardley	WMBC
Mike Hill	WMBC
Roger Stone	WMBC
Sarindar Singh Sahota	WMBC
Barrie Williams	WMBC
Mike Cherry	WMBC
Brian Summers	WMBC
Roger Trotman	WMBC
Michael Clarke	WMBC

In attendance

Sandy Taylor	Birmingham
Jim Graham	RP Secretary

Assembly

Philip Annison	AWM
Roger Sumpton	AWM
Nick Paul	AWM
Jon Barker	Environment Agency
Agnieszka Scott	Environment Agency
Vteta Treptan	Environment Agency
Liz Charlton	GOWM
Neil Mausen	Highways Agency
Vicki Popplewell	West Midlands Regional Assembly
James Watkins	WMBC