

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
25 April 2007

DECISION NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
REGIONAL ASSEMBLY BOARD OF DIRECTORS HELD ON 9 MARCH
2007

Chairman: Cllr David S. Smith (Lichfield)

1.	Apologies and Attendance The Apologies and Attendance of Board members are attached as Appendix A
2.	Chairman's and Vice Chairs' Report Cllr David S Smith (Chairman) advised Directors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of the recent publication from the New Local Government Network (NLGN) entitled 'Redesigning Regionalism' published on 6 March 2007. A further discussion took place under Item 4 to the agenda. Roger McKenzie (Substitute Vice-Chair, OSG) informed the Board; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that Valerie Broom was recovering well and would be returning to work in the very near future. In response, the Chairman requested that best wishes were sent to Valerie on behalf of the Board.
3.	Decision notes of the Board of Directors
3a.	Decision notes of the Board of Directors held on 8 December and Matters Arising The board noted the decision notes of the Board of Directors on 8 December 2006. There were no matters arising.
4.	Draft Decision Notes of the Assembly Meeting held on 17 January 2007 The draft decision notes of the meeting held on 17 January 2007 were noted in advance of formal agreement which would be sought at the Assembly meeting on 25 April 2007.

Matters Arising

Item 7a. West Midlands Regional Assembly Input into Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration.

A letter from ERN to HMT was tabled. The letter set out the ERN response to the Sub National Review. On 6 March a document was published by the NLGN "Redesigning Regionalism" and the Review Reference Group (RRG) had discussed the document.

A summary report was tabled showing key points highlighted arising from the NLGN. The Board were invited to discuss the summary document and the following comments were made:

- City Regions were not mentioned in the document. If there was to be redesign or reorganisation the confidence of the people would be lost.
- Each City Region should work individually as it was clear one size did not fit all.
- WMBC expressed their concerns with the document and stated that partnership working and its achievements had been ignored.
- Clarity was required as to what was expected of the Assemblies. The document did not reflect the RA's current activities.
- The RRG had met yesterday and were looking at a proposition for enhanced regional working. The Board requested that this item be considered by the full Assembly Meeting on 25 April 2007.
- It was felt that there was little understanding of how the WMRA works and of what the WMRA does. A united stance was needed by all sectors.
- The Board considered that more work needed to be done to inform Councillors of what WMRA does and to break down misconceptions. A stronger link with the press and media may be a way forward.

The Board Directors were advised to contact Olwen Dutton for full copies of the report. They were further requested to feed their comments through to Olwen at o.dutton@wmra.gov.uk

**Agreed: The Board to feed their detailed comments to Olwen Dutton.
The item to be on the Agenda for the full Assembly on 25 April 2007.**

Item 8 – Regional Health and Well Being Strategy

The Board was advised that the Health and Well Being Strategy was due to be launched during March and that this item would be the topic of the 'conversation' following the Full Assembly on 25 April 2007.

5.
(1)

**Report of the Chief Executive and Company Secretary
2007-10 Business Plan and Budget**

The Board received the final version of the 2007-10 Business Plan & Budget as submitted to Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) shown as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Board was reminded that at their last meeting, the Chief Executive was given delegated authority to make any amendments as necessary to the Draft Plan following a review meeting with Government Office.

The Company Secretary asked that thanks be noted to Sharon Phillips for the hard work and commitment she has given to producing the budget.

The report recommended that the Board approve the final 2007-10 Business Plan & Budget and recommend it is submitted to the next Assembly meeting for formal adoption.

Sir Albert Bore and Brian Summers raised concerns here over British Airways transferring regional connections to European Cities to Flybe and the detrimental effect this would have on the economy.

Agreed: The Board approved the final 2007-10 Business Plan & Budget and recommended that it was submitted to the next Assembly meeting for formal adoption.

(2)

Agreed: A letter be written to Flybe to seek assurances that business oriented flights would be maintained.

Contingency Fund Requests

The Board received a report that sought to advise them of two separate letters sent to DCLG requesting contingency funding.

The Board had previously approved a recommendation that the Chief Executive seek permission from DCLG for a legal contingency.

At the date of the meeting a formal response from DCLG was awaited.

The terms of the Assembly Funding Agreement allow for a general contingency of **£6,000** subject to approval. The Chief Executive wrote to DCLG on 31 January 2007 requesting permission for a general contingency up to the limit of £6,000 to be carried forward. The contingency would be established from savings in respect of the staffing budget due to recruitment lagging on posts.

The DCLG had now approved the general contingency of up to the

limit of £6,000.

It was recommended that the Board noted and endorsed the contingency requests.

(3) Agreed: The Board noted and endorsed the contingency requests.

2006-07 Q3 Report and Estimated Outturn

The Board received a report that presented the Estimated Outturn report and advised on the anticipated final position for 2006-07.

The Estimated Outturn had been produced following a comprehensive budget monitoring process. It was estimated that the Assembly would fully utilise DCLG funding for 2006-07 with the exception of any approved contingency funds.

The report advised that there was an identified need for further virements between work strands in the final quarter due to varying progress on work strands.

The report recommended that:

- The Board noted the details of the report.
- The Board agreed proposed virements between work strands in the final quarter as detailed in the report.
- The Board was asked to delegate responsibility to the Chief Executive to administer any additional and final virements arising post this report to ensure full utilisation of funding according to work programme priorities.

(4) Agreed: The Board agreed the recommendations as outlined above.

Corporate Governance Issues

The Board received an update report on Corporate Governance issues and activity.

The report highlighted four issues of activity as: -

Internal Audit

The Regional Assembly does not have its own finance staff but as with most of the corporate support to the Regional Partnership, the provision of financial management services is via the WMLGA.

Company Law Reform

The Company Law Reform Bill would come into effect 1 April 2007. It would bring with it a number of changes that included amendments to the role of a Company Director. Appendix B to the report was an extract from the information provided by Companies

House.

Complaints, Comments and Compliments

The Board was advised that the Assembly was currently developing a *Complaints, Comments and Compliments* procedure. Approval of the Chairman and Vice Chairs would be sought before publishing the procedure on our web site. It would outline the Assembly's process to deal with complaints, comments or compliments and a separate guidance note would be produced for staff on how to handle complaints. The final policy would be brought to the next Board Meeting for endorsement.

Register of Interests

The Assembly was required to keep and make available to the public, a register of members' declarations of interest. It was the personal responsibility of members to notify the Assembly of such interests and to update the Assembly when these interests changed.

The report recommended that:-

- That the Board noted the detail of the report.
- That the Board noted the information on Company Law Reform and that each Board Member should personally familiarise themselves with the changes in respect of Directors duties.
- That the Board noted the need to update the Register of Interests and that each Board Member should submit an updated declaration form.

(5) Noted: The Board noted the report and its contents.

Membership Issues

The Board received a report which sought their consideration and agreement on pertinent issues relating to membership of Assembly structures as follows: -

Regional Planning Partnership Vice Chair (Other Stakeholders)

This vacancy, due to the resignation of David Littlemore, had been recently considered by the Other Stakeholders Group and who had nominated Roger Evans to the post. The Regional Planning Partnership Vice Chair also has a position on the Assembly Board.

The OSG withdrew the nomination of Roger Evans until the group had met to endorse the position. This item would be brought back to the next meeting of the Board.

Regional Health Partnership

The Board was advised that the Regional Health Partnership has proposed that Cllr Steve Eling (current Acting Chair) be appointed as Chair of the Partnership following the stepping down of David

	<p>Littlemore (previously from the Other Stakeholders Group). On behalf of the Other Stakeholders Group Phil Davis had confirmed their full support for Cllr Steve Eling to take the Chair with Donald McIntosh (SHA non-executive Board Member) to be Vice Chair to the Partnership.</p> <p>The Board agreed the nomination of Cllr Steve Eling to take the Chair of the Regional Health Partnership with Donald McIntosh as the Vice Chair.</p> <p><u>Equalities and Diversity Partnership</u> The membership of the Equalities and Diversity Partnership was discussed.</p> <p>Following consideration of suitable candidates by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Partnership to four vacant positions, the Board endorsed those listed below as additional members to the Equality & Diversity Partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve Blick, Age Concern England, covering age-related matters • Sue Huyton, West Midlands RNIB covering disability matters • Anita Edwards, Regional Women’s Officer, UNISON, covering gender matters (particularly women) • Frank Reeves, Chief Executive, Race Equality West Midlands, covering race-related matters <p>The Board agreed the addition memberships to the Equalities and Diversity Partnerships.</p> <p>(6)</p> <p>Alignment of Meetings The Board received a report which advised them of the Executive Committee’s decision at their 28th February meeting to seek to align future meeting dates of the Board and WMLGA Executive Committee.</p> <p>It was recommended that the Board noted the decision of the Executive Committee and endorsed the principle of aligning future meeting dates.</p> <p>Noted: The Board noted the decision of the Executive Committee.</p> <p>Endorsed: The Board endorsed the principle of aligning future meeting dates of the Executive Committee and the Board.</p>
6.	<p>Regional Planning Executive Meeting – 7 February 2007 The Board received a report which sought their ratification of the decisions of the meeting of the Regional Planning Executive held on Wednesday 7 February 2007 which was not quorate.</p>

	<p>Agreed: Members agreed to ratify the decisions of the RPE meeting held on 7 February 2007.</p>
<p>7.</p> <p>7a.</p>	<p>Scrutiny and Strategic Review</p> <p>European Strategic Review – Key Issues</p> <p>The Board received a report, presented by Roger McKenzie, which informed them of progress with the European Strategic Review and of issues that would be addressed through the recommendations.</p> <p>The report advised that the Review’s aim was to “assess the effectiveness of the Region in securing and utilising European funding for the West Midlands Region”. During the evidence gathering process the Review Panel identified the need to refocus the review on how engagement with the European agenda is taken forward within the Region.</p> <p>A review report giving further details and recommendations was tabled at the meeting and highlighted a number of issues that regional partners needed to address.</p> <p>It was anticipated that all recommendations would include timescales and an organisation or regional structure responsible for implementation. Progress reports would be submitted annually to the Strategic Review Group as part of the Assembly’s scrutiny and strategic review monitoring arrangements.</p> <p>The report recommended that the Board note the report and that individual members submit responses during the consultation process as appropriate.</p> <p>Noted: The Board noted the report.</p>
<p>7b.</p>	<p>Scrutiny Review of Advantage West Midlands: Access to Finance</p> <p>The Board received a report which advised them of the forthcoming scrutiny review of Advantage West Midlands: Access to Finance.</p> <p>Evidence sessions would commence in early March and conclude in May 2007 with a draft report available for consultation from early June. The Assembly would receive the final report for endorsement at the Annual General Meeting on 18 July 2007.</p> <p>It was recommended that the Board note the report.</p> <p>Noted: The Board noted the report.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Draft Response to the West Midlands Economic Strategy Choices Consultation</p> <p>The Board received a report that provided them with a draft response to the West Midlands Economic Strategy Review Choices</p>

	<p>Consultation and following discussion requested that the Board sign off the response for submission subject to any requested amendment.</p> <p>Whilst the WMES Review Choices Consultation closed on the 28th February, Advantage West Midlands had agreed to receive the WMRA response subsequent to the Board Meeting on the 9th March 2007.</p> <p>All of the Assembly's Policy Partnerships, associated partnerships and officer groups had been requested to provide comments on the consultation document.</p> <p>The Board discussed the response and the following comments were made: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board supported the proposal for the West Midlands to have a Vision Statement. The profile and identity of the West Midlands is poor and the WMES, plus other strategies, must contribute positively to both. • Reference to Airports needed to be included. • The WMRES must recognise the spatial dimensions of the region as set out in the WMRSS and that the WMES should be spatial as well as sector based. • When dealing with skills the WMES must also acknowledge the place of EU Structural Funds, together with the need to focus on high level skills as well as basic skills • Quality of life was important – the economy was a sub-set. The WMES must set the framework for delivering improvements in quality of life and the economy. • Manufacturing remained an important part of the West Midlands economy. The region and AWM, through business support programmes, must support the sector in respect of growth and diversification. • Business support service must also assist companies in understanding the need to attract and recruit graduates. • Enterprise/Innovation/Skills must use WMRO data to assist in deciding the direction of travel that the WMES must take as a collective approach. <p>It was recommended that the Board sign off the draft response for submission subject to any amendments.</p> <p>Agreed: The Board agreed to the recommendation outlined above subject to their comments being included.</p> <p>Agreed: The Board agreed to lead on the development of a Regional Vision.</p>
9.	<p>West Midlands RSS (WMRSS) Update Phases 1, 2 and 3</p> <p>The Board received a report that provided an update on current progress in</p>

	<p>bringing forward revisions to the Regional Spatial Strategy (WMRSS)</p> <p>It was recommended that the contents of the report be noted.</p> <p>Noted: The Board noted the contents of the report.</p>
10.	<p>Climate Change</p> <p>The Board received a report that informed them of the steps being taken by the Regional Assembly in response to the climate change challenge following its Annual Conference and the last Assembly meeting in October 2006.</p> <p>The report advised Members of the Supplement to Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1): Planning and Climate Change for the Regional Spatial Strategy which was issued for consultation in December 2006.</p> <p>The Board requested that this item be brought to the Full Assembly Meeting on 25 April 2007.</p> <p>It was recommended that the Board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Noted the steps being taken by the Regional Assembly following the Annual Conference on Climate Change, and (b) Noted the contents and issues (as laid out in the report) raised in the Draft PPS1 for the revision of the Regional Spatial Strategy. <p>Noted: The Board noted the report.</p> <p>Agreed: This item be brought to the Full Assembly Meeting on 25 April 2007.</p>
11.	<p>Draft Agenda for Assembly Meeting – 25 April 2007</p> <p>The draft agenda was noted and agreed. Additional items were agreed as:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Change NLGN Lyons Review – if published
12.	<p>Dates of Future Meetings – 8 June 2007</p> <p>The Board noted and agreed the date of the next meeting.</p>
13.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>The Board were advised that a nomination to the Housing Partnership and the Housing Executive from the Business Council was in process.</p>

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

**ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES OF
THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY BOARD OF DIRECTORS
HELD ON 9 MARCH 2007**

Present: Cllr David S Smith, Chairman

Roger McKenzie
Elizabeth Newman
Cllr Jo Jones
Cllr Chris Saint
Cllr Albert Bore
Keith Austin
Brian Summers
Roger Stone
Barrie Williams
Sarindar Sahota
Rex Roberts

Officers in attendance:

Sharon Doak
Phil Davis
Ciara Mulligan
Liz Charlton
Olwen Dutton
Rose Poulter

Apologies:

Terry Dix
Roger Phillips
Paul Tilsley
Claude Bodenham
John Lines
Bob Badham
Steve Eling
Roger Evans