West Midlands
Regional Assembly

NEWS RELEASE

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Regional Partnership Working Set to Continue

The Chairman of the West Midlands Regional Assembly, Cllr David Smith, today broadly welcomed the outcome of the government's review of sub-national economic development and regeneration, which will see Regional Assemblies being replaced by a new Local Authority Leaders Board working alongside the Regional Development Agency to deliver effective and sustainable economic development at the regional level.

Commenting on today's announcement, Cllr David S Smith, Chairman of the West Midlands Regional Assembly said: "We have known for sometime that Regional Assemblies will be going in March 2010, but we are pleased that today's announcement sees so many of our functions and work being transferred into the replacement organisation. We are also delighted that the government has backed down on the original proposals to give regional planning, housing and transport straight to a government agency. Instead the announcement sees local government, through the new Local Authority Leaders Board playing the leading role in deciding on as well as delivering local services."

The main focus for the new partnership between the Local Authority Leaders Board and the Regional Development Agency will be the formation of a new single development plan for the West Midlands. The plan will combine the Assembly's current responsibility for regional housing, transport and planning through the Regional Spatial Strategy with the Regional Economic Strategy, which is currently produced by the Regional Development Agency.

The Local Authority Leaders Board and the Regional Development Agency will have joint responsibility for the plan, including drafting, implementing and monitoring its delivery. This strategy will set the framework for the activities, plans and investment decisions of the Regional Development Agency, Homes and Communities Agency and other public bodies including health organisations and local authorities.

"Again the Assembly is pleased that the government has acknowledged the importance of democratic accountability and the need to ensure that local authorities are at the heart of delivering the new single regional strategy. Naturally we welcome the partnership approach with government to deliver those essential services, an approach that has underpinned regional working in the West Midlands for the last 50 years", added Cllr Smith.

"However, we are disappointed that the Assembly's scrutiny function, which held the work of the Regional Development Agency to account, will no longer exist and instead may in part be picked up by newly formed Regional Select Committees.

"Finally, as Chairman of the Regional Assembly, I will continue to ensure that the Assembly fulfils its responsibility and is in good order when its work is transferred across to the new organisation. We will help to ensure that local government works together to deliver growth and regeneration projects that

the West Midlands needs. We are also already putting in place arrangements with the Regional Development Agency to ensure that we keep working together to improve the Region, address housing needs and help the local economy to recover. It is disappointing that the government is no longer proposing to devolve Regional Development Agency (RDA) funding to local authorities. We will however accept the government's invitation to work with the RDAs and local councils to ensure regeneration spending is directed and delivered locally by the people who know their local communities' needs best."

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For further information please contact Jo Kite, Head of Communications on 0121 678 1044 or Jay Rana, Press Officer, 0121 245 0181.

About the West Midlands Regional Assembly

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 elected 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 organizations 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 organizations from across the West Midlands region.
5. The Assembly is the Regional Planning Body, and is also responsible for scrutinizing the operation of the region's RDA, Advantage West Midlands.
6. For further information, visit our website www.wmra.gov.uk

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