

Agenda Item No. 7

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Board of Directors - Friday 6th October 2006

Revisions of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) – update report

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to:

- a. provide an update on current progress in bringing forward revisions to both the RSS and RES; and
- b. demonstrate that action is being taken to ensure effective linkages between the two processes

2. Recommendation

That the contents of the report be noted

The Regional Spatial Strategy Revision

a. Background

- 1.1 The Regional Spatial Strategy incorporates the Regional Transport Strategy and guides the preparation of Local Development Frameworks and Local Transport Plans so they can deliver a coherent framework for Regional Development.
- 1.2 The RSS was published in June 2004; it was recommended by the Secretary of State that an immediate revision of certain elements should begin. The Regional Planning Partnership took the decision that this should be undertaken in a phased way - Phase One being the Black Country Study.
- 1.3 The Phase Two Revision was launched with the consultation Project Plan in February 2006. It considers a wide range of issues, including housing, employment land, waste and transport.
- 1.4 Phase Three is timetabled to start in Spring 2007. Issues included in Phase Three are critical rural services, recreational provision, regionally significant environmental issues and the development of a framework for provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites.

b. Current Activity

- 2.1 Phase One: Black Country Study submitted the Preferred Option to the Secretary of State in May 2006. An Examination in Public is scheduled for 9th January. More information can be found on www.blackcountryconsortium.co.uk

2.2 The Phase Two Spatial Options are currently being developed by officer groups in preparation for the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) submission on the 28th September. The Options will take into account the advice received from Strategic Authorities received earlier in the year. Following the SA/SEA, the Spatial Options will be further refined and presented to Members in late October/Early November. There will be an eight week public consultation period in January 2007.

2.3 Spatial Options are designed to open up issues for debate and to invite comment. Key issues include:

Communities for the Future:

- Overall levels of households up to 2026 and distribution of new housing provision at Local Planning Authority level, understanding the implications of the Government household projections for the Region.
- Housing affordability and mix

Prosperity for All:

- Employment land provision, including identifying a minimum reservoir of land for each Local Planning Authority
- Potential options for further regionally significant employment sites: Regional Logistics Sites, Regional Investment Sites and need for additional Major Investment Sites
- Centres: identifying the investment priorities for the Strategic Centres including the balance between 'in centre' and 'out of centre' office development

Waste:

- The RSS will incorporate the Regional Waste Strategy when re-published. The Options will consider municipal, commercial and industrial waste exploring issues of diversion from landfill and appropriate levels of tonnages for Waste Planning Authorities.

Transport:

- Issues being considered include: strategic park and ride, car parking standards, road user charging, role of the airports.

2.4 The Spatial Options will put forward for consultation challenging issues for the Region. The comments received through the consultation period will be used to inform the Preferred Option, submission intended for December 2007.

2.5 Once the Spatial Options have been approved by the Regional Planning Partnership in November they will be published for formal consultation - beginning in January 2007, for an eight week period.

- 2.6 The timetable for the immediate stage of Spatial Options development is as follows:
- 6th – 15th September : RSS Reference Groups
 - 19th September: RSS Task Group/Regional Advisory Group
 - 27th September RSS Strategic Management Steering Group
 - 28th September SA/SEA

c. Links with RES Review

- 3.1 The RSS Partial Revision and the Review of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) are running concurrently. It will therefore be vital to ensure that as the policy options of the RES develop they are aligned so that the two strategies remain mutually supportive. To this end, officers from AWM and the Regional Assembly are involved in detailed liaison on a regular basis.
- 3.2 An RSS/RES Working Group has been set up to take forward this work. In its early discussions, the Group has agreed that there is a need to ensure that the RES and RSS evidence bases are linked to become a joint evidence base for strategy development and that there should be joint media management of the two processes. The following areas have been identified as the key areas of linkage between the RES and Phase 2 of the RSS revision;
- patterns of housing growth/employment needs
 - employment land provision
 - centres.

The Regional Economic Strategy Review

a. Background

- 4.1 The review of the RES was launched in March 2006. The Regional Economic Strategy sets out what the West Midlands needs to do to improve economic performance by both building on strengths and addressing the market failures that hold the Region's economy back.
- 4.2 The RES is reviewed every three years to ensure that it remains relevant and continues to provide the right solutions. Economic changes such as the changing demographic profile of the workforce and the impact of emerging economies in countries such as China and India will need to be considered - as well as changes in the way that the Region delivers economic improvements such as Local Area Agreements and the emerging City Regions.
- 4.3 The current review of the RES will consider the agreed actions which will be required to ensure existing targets for 2010 are met but will also look beyond that milestone to 2020 to establish what the Region will need to do to continue to improve economic performance.

b. Phase One

5.1 Phase One of the review, Building the Evidence Base, is now completed. A report has been prepared for each of the five strands; these are available on the RES review website at <http://www.advantagem.co.uk/wmesreview.html> The five strands are as follows:

- Regional Economic Context
- Relative Performance of the West Midlands Economy
- Functioning Economic Geography
- Evaluation of the Current Regional Economic Strategy
- Evaluation of the Three Delivery Mechanisms

c. Phase Two

6.2 Phase Two of the revision is now underway. The consultancy 'Regeneris' has been appointed to scope the Policy Options phase. 'Regeneris' presented the scoping work to the meeting of the RES Review Regional Reference Group on the 1st September.

6.3 The Reference Group noted the following points:

- Although it has been agreed that the five drivers of productivity will be used as cornerstones for developing policy options, the Region will define what we mean rather than tacitly accepting the Government's definition.
- Although the consultant's informed the Group that the vision and pillars are not up for review at this stage (causing some unease within the Group), it was noted that there will be an opportunity to review this situation as the policy options develop. The AWM/consultants view is that we need to understand the gaps and or problems then review the vision.
- The evidence work strongly suggests that Pillar 4 should be re-evaluated and the new RES must be clear about impact/benefits for people and communities.
- Pillar 5, Powerful Voice for the Region, must be a strong part of the revised RES.
- Consideration of how partners work together for the regional good is important and must be part of the RES Review considerations.
- There is a need to reflect roles played by migrants in our economy.
- Skills and education should be considered, not skills alone.
- We need to consider quality of communities not just quality of life.
- Health should be linked into employment issues.
- The work must reflect the Lisbon Agenda.

2.4 The timetable for this stage is as follows

- 5th October - RSS/RES Working Group discussion on Draft Policy Options report
- 6th October - Draft Policy Options report to be made available to RES Regional Reference Group for comment.
- 20th October - Final Policy Options report
- 25th October – WMRA Full Assembly meeting discussion of RES Draft Policy Options report
- 10th November – AWM Annual Conference and formal launch of the consultation on the Draft Policy Options report. The consultation will run until March 2007.

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