

Agenda Item No. 8

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Assembly Meeting – 18 January 2006

Strategic Review of Equalities and Diversity – Final Report

Report of the Panel

1. Purpose of Report

To present a copy of the recommendations arising from this strategic review to the full Assembly for information. The complete report can be accessed on the Assembly's website.

2. Recommendation

That the Assembly discuss and endorse the recommendations of the strategic review report.

3. Background

- 3.1 The aim of the scrutiny review was to examine how equality and diversity issues were being approached within the West Midlands and the extent to which regional partners are working together.
- 3.2 The review commenced in February 2005 and consisted of formal sessions with Concordat Partners and workshops with business representatives, equality practitioners and regional decision makers with input from approximately 150 individuals.
- 3.3 The Review Panel included co-opted members from Advantage West Midlands and Government Office for the West Midlands. It was chaired by Rev John Hall, with Roger McKenzie as Vice Chair both from the Other Stakeholders Group. All Panel members have dedicated a significant proportion of their time to complete the review.
- 3.4 Partly as a consequence of this review, the Home Office have agreed to fund a three year secondment to the Assembly commencing on 17 January 2006. Carmel Kerr, Equalities and Diversity Director will lead the implementation of this review and an initial task will be the production of a draft work plan by 31 March 2006.
- 3.5 The Strategic Review are responsible for monitoring the implementation of review recommendations. In addition the Review Panel have requested that they hold an additional meeting in twelve months in order to review progress.

4. Report Recommendations

- 4.1 The Panel made fifteen recommendations for regional partners as listed below. The rationale for each recommendation is discussed within the main body of the report.
- 4.2 These are intended to provide a framework for future action that will require to be implemented by all regional partners working together.
- R1 That the West Midlands Regional Assembly and Sustainability West Midlands ensure that the social aspects of the Regional Sustainable Development Framework are developed further within the final version to be completed in April 2006. In particular it should demonstrate how actions to address equality and diversity issues can impact on other policy areas. The consultation period on the draft framework (30 January to 27 March 2006) should actively engage with social partners to develop aims and objectives.
- R2 That Sustainability West Midlands actively works to strengthen its membership from the social sector and explore how equalities and diversity issues impact on all aspects of its work. This should be included as an action in the their annual business plan to be published in July 2006
- R3 That the sustainable development monitoring mechanisms adopted by the West Midlands Regional Assembly make specific references to how equality and diversity issues are being addressed. The guidance for this annual report to the West Midlands Regional Assembly Annual General meeting held in July should include specific questions in relation to equality and diversity issues.
- R4 That Regional Concordat partners nominate an identified Board Member, Elected Member or Senior Officer as an internal Equalities and Diversity Champion by 31 March 2006.
- R5 That a new Regional Partnership Body be established under the aegis of the West Midlands Regional Assembly to replace the Social Inclusion Partnership with a first meeting of core members to be held during April 2006.
- R6 That the new Regional Partnership Body organises a regional summit to be held by autumn 2006 to provide a "safe space" for regional leaders to discuss equality and diversity issues facing the region in an open and honest way.
- R7 That the nervousness about issues and terminology within the region is addressed by the development of appropriate "branding" including a recognisable name and status for the new Regional Partnership Body. This should be agreed and in place so it can be

launched at the regional summit (see Recommendation 6) by autumn 2006.

- R8 That a priority of the new Regional Partnership Body is to develop options by September 2006 for the proposed regional CEHR presence and how this will link to existing and proposed regional structures.
- R9 That the West Midlands Regional Assembly explicitly adopts equalities and diversity as central principles of all aspects of its work and takes on a regional leadership role upon endorsement of this report by the West Midlands Regional Assembly. Partners must have a clear understanding that this does not replace individual responsibilities of partners to collectively address issues.
- R10 That a secretariat is developed to support regional working with clear progress demonstrated by 31 June 2006. An initial approach could be the creation of a "virtual secretariat", made up of individuals within various organisations who provide a proportion of their time to support joint working
- R11 That the Regional Concordat is amended by July 2006 to include a specific commitment to valuing all citizens and giving all communities and individuals the chance to contribute to regional renaissance.
- R12 That the new Regional Partnership Body develops a website to allow sharing of research, good practice and information including links with clear progress demonstrated by autumn 2006.
- R13 That Concordat Partners carry out an audit of their internal processes and delivery arrangements by 31 December 2006 in the light of this review to identify areas for improvement and joint working.
- R14 That the new Regional Partnership Body establishes a regional commission to examine how regional partners can contribute to the understanding, development and achievement of community cohesion goals. Clear progress should be demonstrated by 31 December 2006.
- R15 That the new Regional Partnership Body encourages bodies currently providing regional awards to include an equalities and diversity element for awards to be made in 2007 and thereafter.

Rev John Hall
Panel Chair

Dagmar Waller
Strategic Review Officer
Tel: 0121 678 1054
Email: d.waller@wmra.gov.uk