

## Agenda Item No. 4

### WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Assembly Meeting – 5 April 2006

### DRAFT DECISION NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2006

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**Chairman: Councillor David S Smith (Lichfield DC)**

#### **Attendance – Appendix 1**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>DECISIONS/REPORTS</b>
<b>Apologies</b>	<p>Apologies have been received from:</p> <p><b>Local Government sector</b></p> <p>Cllr Mick Salih (Vice-Chair, Stoke on Trent City Council), Cllr Brian Edwards (South Staffordshire), Cllr Richard Hyde (Warwickshire) Cllr Martin Jennings (Wychavon DC), Cllr Dr George Lord (Worcestershire CC), Cllr John Mutton (Coventry City Council), Cllr Clive Smith (Malvern Hills DC), Cllr Les Smith (North Warks BC) and Cllr Dave Tyler (Dudley).</p> <p><b>Business sector</b></p> <p>Martin Chambers, Sir William Lawrence, Chris Minshull and Chris Newis.</p> <p><b>Other Stakeholders group</b></p> <p>Valerie Broom (Vice-Chair), Richard Quallington and Roger McKenzie.</p> <p><b>Others</b></p> <p>Malcolm Harbour (MEP) and John Lancaster (British Waterways).</p>
<b>Sarindar Singh Sahota</b>	<p>The Chairman welcomed Sarindar Singh Sahota to his first meeting as the Vice-Chair (Business sector) of the Assembly.</p>
<b>Elizabeth Newman</b>	<p>The Chairman thanked Elizabeth for representing the Other Stakeholders Group on behalf of Valerie Broom who had presented her apologies.</p>
<b>Trudi Elliott</b>	<p>The Chairman advised members that Trudi Elliott had been appointed as the Regional Director of the Government Office for the West Midlands. He offered his congratulations to Trudi on the news of her appointment. This was endorsed by the Assembly.</p>
<b>New Year's Honours</b>	<p>The Chairman highlighted individuals who had been commended in the New Years Honours list. He advised that he would write on behalf of the Assembly Members to offer their congratulations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• John Austin, formerly the Bishop of Aston and a former Assembly member, received an OBE for services to inter-</li></ul>

faith relations.

- Councillor Cyril Woodall (Dudley MBC) received an OBE for services to Local Government.
- Colin Richards, a Conservation Officer at South Shropshire DC received an MBE for services to Local Government.
- Alan Doig, Chief Fire Officer at Staffordshire Fire and Rescue received a CBE.

### **West Midlands Rural Delivery Framework (WMRDF)**

The Chairman advised members that the West Midlands Rural Delivery Framework was currently the subject of consultation and encouraged members to participate. A summary document was available at the meeting for the information of members.

### **Members' Disclosures of Interests**

Roger Stone (WMBC) referred to the importance of probity in the working of the Regional Planning Executive/Partnership. He had written to Trudi Elliott setting out suggested measures to assist in this process.

Trudi Elliott (Chief Executive) advised the Assembly that the English Regions Network (ERN) was currently developing a National Code of Conduct for Regional Planning Bodies which should address some of the issues raised.

### **Chairman's and Vice-Chairs' Reports**

#### **Councillor David S Smith - Chairman**

- He reported that on 12 January 2006, Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart and John Ransford, the Chairman and Deputy Chief Executive of the national LGA visited the Regional Partnership Centre and met with members of the WMLGA's Executive Committee, and West Midlands members on national LGA bodies.

The visit had been positively received and the potential benefits in closer working would be the subject of further discussion.

#### **Sarindar Singh Sahota – Vice Chair (Business sector)**

- He paid tribute to the significant contribution made to the work of the Regional Assembly by his predecessor Ben Reid.
- He reported that the Business Council had submitted its response to the Choices for the Black Country Consultation report.

#### **Elizabeth Newman (representing the Other Stakeholders Group)**

- She restated their group's concerns regarding the duration of the Assembly meetings and requested that this be re-examined.
- She referred to the additional responsibilities being placed on members of the group, citing the transfer of the housing function as an example, and asked that the support for the Other Stakeholders Group be considered.

**Decision notes  
of the meeting  
held on 26  
October 2005**

The decision notes of the Assembly meeting held on 26 October 2005 were **agreed** as a correct record.

**Draft Budget  
and Business  
Plan 2006-2009**

Trudi Elliott (Chief Executive) presented the draft Budget and Business Plan 2006-09 (attached as an appendix to the report) for endorsement prior to its submission to ODPM via GOWM on 24 January 2006.

The Business Plan had been devised to meet not only ODPM requirements, but as an internal management tool. It had proved a clear guide and sound base for the monitoring of performance.

The Assembly was advised that the budget settlement from ODPM for 2006-2007 was £2,191,000 - an increase of approximately 6% on the 2005-06 grant.

The attention of members was drawn to some key issues, outlined in the report, pertaining to projected income and expenditure; and areas where the resources demands were growing at a greater extent than anticipated.

The Assembly

- (a) **endorsed** the Draft Budget and Business Plan for 2006-2009.
- (b) **delegated** to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Regional Partnerships Secretary, Chairman and Vice Chairs, authority to make such modifications as were necessary to the draft budget and/or business plan upon receipt of comments from ODPM.
- (c) **noted** that the final budget and business plan be submitted to the Assembly meeting in April for approval.

**West Midlands  
Regional  
Funding  
Allocations –  
Advice to  
Government**

Rose Poulter (Director of Policy) presented a revised draft of the "West Midlands Regional Funding Allocations – Advice to Government" document for consideration. (This was circulated at the meeting). The closing date for submission was 31 January 2006.

The draft advice, representing a joint approach to the challenge set by Government, had been informed by debate and discussion at officer meetings, meetings of the Assembly, its Board of Directors and Policy Partnerships, specifically Transport and Planning. It had also been discussed within Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) and Advantage West Midlands (AWM).

Members were advised that although the substance of the advice would not change, it would be subject to further editing as it was important that the key messages from the region were clearly stated.

Gerald Kells (OSG) considered it important that all interested parties had had and would continue to have the opportunity to participate in the development of transport proposals, for example, the Shrewsbury North Relief Road scheme. He also expressed the concerns of the environment sector regarding the perceived and potential environmental impacts of some of the regional transport priorities.

Cllr Malcolm Pate (Shropshire) assured the Assembly that the Shrewsbury North Relief Road scheme had been subject to wide consultation with all stakeholders and members of the public.

Brian Summers (WMBC) considered the development of the Regional Transport Priorities to be a considerable achievement which offered a regional view for consideration by Government. However, it was clear that the resources currently available were insufficient to achieve the desired goals.

He also considered it critical that, in order to deliver the housing and transport programmes beginning in 2006 – 2007, approval needed to be given to the various outstanding projects before the end of the financial year.

Roger Phillips (Herefordshire) advised Members that the West Midlands Regional Assembly was well advanced across the regions in developing this advice and offered his thanks to all who had participated in the process. Members were reminded that the advice did not currently include any major rail expenditure which was critical for the infrastructure of the region.

John Hart (WMBC) welcomed the work that had been undertaken and felt that this practice should be extended to address other issues including funding for skills which was accepted as a regionally significant issue.

The Assembly

- i) **endorsed** the approach being taken to the content and arrangements for finalising the West Midlands Regional Funding Allocations – Advice to Government, and
- ii) **agreed** to delegate to the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Assembly responsibility to sign-off the final document in conjunction with the Chairman and Chief Executive of AWM and the Regional Director of GOWM.

**Draft Statement  
– West Midlands  
Region –  
Incorporating A  
City Region and  
Sub-Regional  
Approach**

Rose Poulter (Director of Policy) presented a draft statement entitled “West Midlands Region – Incorporating A City Region and Sub-Regional Approach” for consideration.

The report sought to set the nature and role of City Regions in the context of the Assembly’s core activities - as Regional Planning Body, the scrutiny of the Regional Development Agency (AWM) activity and facilitator of regional strategic

partnership work.

Within the Assembly, how this approach would support existing regional and sub-regional arrangements had been discussed by the Board of Directors and the Regional Planning Partnership. Similar discussions had taken place amongst the Local Authorities Chief Executives and Leaders at a WMLGA event.

These discussions had informed the draft statement which sought to confirm that the Assembly was supportive of the City Region approach in the context of the region as a whole with all its sub-regions. It also sought to clarify the expectations and agree in outline the nature of the relationship between the Assembly and this approach.

Cllr Ted Richards (Solihull MBC) reported that the approach had been developed by the seven Metropolitan Authorities in the best interests of the Region as a whole.

Richard Moxon (WMBC) expressed support for the statement and considered that maintaining communications on progressing this approach across the sectors and throughout the region was essential.

Roger Phillips (Herefordshire) stated that the non-metropolitan areas were keen to play their full part in this approach.

Nick Paul (Chair of AWM Board) expressed support for the approach. He was aware the partnership working within the West Midlands was well regarded across the country.

The Assembly

- (i) **noted** the comments of Members; and
- (ii) **endorsed** the statement entitled "West Midlands Region – Incorporating A City Region and Sub-Regional Approach".

### **Strategic Review of Equalities and Diversity - Final report**

Rev'd John Hall (Chair of the Strategic Review Panel) presented a report detailing the recommendations arising from the Strategic Review of Equalities and Diversity.

The review, the most extensive piece of strategic review work undertaken, had initially been intended to seek views regarding the regional presence of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR). However, discussions with regional partners had identified more fundamental issues around leadership, integration and regional structures for consideration.

The Panel's report set out fifteen recommendations for regional partners (these are appended to the decision notes as appendix 2).

He offered his thanks to the Panel members for their commitment and contributions to the review and partner agencies for their support, particularly AWM, GOWM and Business in the Community.

He also thanked Dagmar Waller and her team for their support throughout the process.

He welcomed the three year secondment of Carmel Kerr from the Home Office who, as Equalities and Diversity Director based in Assembly, would lead the implementation of the Panel's recommendations and was pleased to see her present at the meeting.

The Assembly

- (i) **endorsed** the report and recommendations of the Strategic Review of Equalities and Diversity, and
- (ii) **expressed** their thanks to the Panel for their efforts.

**Response to the ODPM Request for detailed proposals on implementing the transfer of the Regional Housing Board function to the West Midlands Regional Assembly Limited**

A report setting out the detailed proposals for implementing the proposed transfer of the Regional Housing Board functions to the Assembly was submitted for approval.

The initial proposals had been reconsidered in light of ODPM's revised guidance and legal advice received in relation to securing the functions within the Assembly's company structure.

The proposed terms of reference for the Regional Housing Executive (RHE) and Regional Housing Partnership (RHP) were appended to the report. These established a wide partnership (RHP) whose membership would not be restricted to full Assembly members enabling nominating bodies to nominate non-Assembly members with particular relevant expertise. This body would address the broad policy issues and make recommendations to the Regional Housing Executive.

The Regional Housing Executive would be a committee of the Assembly and its membership would comprise only RHP members. This body would take executive decisions and both make the formal recommendations to Government and approve the policy recommendations of the RHP.

To achieve a shared perspective on housing and planning issues, a cross over membership from the Regional Planning and Housing Partnerships was proposed.

Discussions were ongoing to establish the best mechanism for engaging the support and expertise provided by the current Regional Housing Board and the Regional Housing Partnership.

Roger Stone (WMBC) expressed concerns over the balance of authority between the Housing Executive and Housing Partnership. The Assembly were advised that if the RHP were to retain for itself any of the responsibilities of the Housing Executive its membership would need to be restricted to Assembly members which was not considered desirable.

The Assembly

- (a) **approved** the draft terms of reference for the Regional Housing Partnership and Regional Housing Executive, as attached as Appendix 1 of the report, for submission to ODPM.

- (b) **noted** that once ODPM had approved the proposals the Assembly, at a future meeting, approve modifications to the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association to
- (i) allow the Board of Directors to create Committees of the Board whose members were not all members of the Board; and to
  - (ii) list the Regional Housing Board functions as Company functions.

### **Review of the West Midlands Economic Strategy**

Nick Paul (Chairman of AWM Board) set out the draft proposals from Advantage West Midlands for the review of the West Midlands Economic Strategy. AWM were keen to ensure engagement throughout the period of the review, with the Assembly and welcomed the comments and suggestions Members at this stage.

Government guidance specified that the Regional Economic Strategy should be reviewed every three years with the next publication date being 2007. The proposed timetable was set out in the report.

This review would be undertaken in line with the new Government guidance. The states that a RES should set out a medium to long term (5-10 years) strategy based on a substantive body of evidence and set out clear policy options and costed policies. In addition, it should be consistent with other key strategies, especially the Regional Spatial Strategy, and incorporate a full Sustainability Appraisal and a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

However, this review needed to take a firm look at the objectives of the strategy and whether they remain valid. That would include examining the key delivery mechanisms and their continuing relevance and purpose.

During discussion the following points were made which would inform subsequent officer discussion and the development of the review:-

- Cllr Saint (Stratford DC) asked that cross-boundary working be considered as an option. Stoke-on-Trent and South Cheshire were cited as an example where this may make economic sense.
- Cllr Bore (Birmingham) welcomed that the review would take account of changes in national and European policy. He also asked whether the research work lead by the West Midlands Observatory would be shared with partners. He was advised that this would be published on the website.

In view of the next Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) announcement in 2007, Cllr Bore requested that officers consider whether to have either a combined or a separate Strategy and Action Plan, as separating the documents would allow the Action Plan to be finalised

following the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007.

- John Hart (WMBC) was broadly supportive of the approach as outlined and would welcome the opportunity to examine the contribution of specific programmes - what worked well and what not so well.
- Rose Poulter (WMRA) considered it important for the current Revision of the RSS and Review of the RES proceed in tandem and continue to align.
- She would wish to discuss a mechanism for capturing the expertise of the Assembly Secretariat and the officer support and technical groups to assist in the development of briefs and act as reference groups for technical work to support the RES Review.
- She also indicated that the Assembly and its Partnerships offered opportunities for formal debate as the RES Review progressed.
- Nick Paul expressed his thanks to Rose for the offers of assistance and to members for the contributions to the debate.

The Chair thanked Nick Paul for attending the meeting.

The Assembly **agreed** that officers from the Assembly Secretariat and AWM would meet to discuss utilising the expertise of the Assembly Secretariat and the technical groups to assist in the development of briefs and act as reference groups for technical work to support the RES Review and report back with proposals to the Assembly meeting in April 2006.

### **Decisions of the Board of Directors**

The Assembly was advised of matters considered by the Board at its meeting on 2 December 2005 which were not otherwise the subject of a report to this meeting.

The Board had considered the Scrutiny and Strategic Review Reporting and Publication Protocol and a number of corporate governance matters.

#### **Regional Partnership Secretariat – Integrated Organisational Structure**

Nigel Summers (Regional Partnerships Secretary) advised the Assembly that the recruitment of a new Chief Executive would be delegated to the Regional Partnerships Secretary in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairs of the WMLGA and WMRA.

Sarindar Singh Sahota (WMBC) received an assurance that the integrated structure would not affect the independence of the Regional Assembly.

#### **Expansion of Coventry Airport – Costs of appearing at a public inquiry**

Gerald Kells (OSG) welcomed the funding from ODPM to meet part of the costs of appearing at this inquiry. He felt it

important that the Assembly should have the sufficient resources to respond when its conformity decisions were legally challenged and asked officers to make appropriate representation to ODPM. He was informed that this issue was being addressed through the English Regions Network (ERN).

Cllr Pate (Shropshire) referred to the developing situation at RAF Cosford and asked for an indication of the Assembly's position.

The meeting was advised that this was a complex issue. As a statutory consultee and the Regional Planning Body, it would not be appropriate for a position to be taken on potential development at RAF Cosford. However, Bridgnorth District Council had requested an informal officer opinion. This confirmed that the Master Plan for Development of RAF Cosford was in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy.

The content of the report were **noted**.

### **Regional Policy Partnerships Activity**

A report setting out the current activities of the Regional Policy Partnerships; and a proposal for annual reporting from the Partnerships on how their work addressed sustainable development was considered.

The Assembly

- (i) **noted** the content of the report, and
- (ii) **endorsed** the proposals for annual reporting by Policy Partnerships on their contribution to sustainable development.

### **Dates of future meetings**

The dates for future meetings are 5 April 2006 and 12 July 2006 (Annual General Meeting). The venues had yet to be determined. Members who were aware of potential venues were asked to contact the Assembly Secretariat.

The Assembly **noted** the dates of future meetings.

**Chairman**

**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY – 18 January 2006**

**Attendance**

**Chairman: Councillor David S Smith (Lichfield DC)**

Cllr Philip Atkins\* (Staffordshire), Cllr Keith Austin (Telford and Wrekin), Cllr Mrs Margaret Begg (Warwick DC), Cllr M Bentley\* (Newcastle-under-Lyme BC), Cllr Claude Bodenham (South Shropshire), Cllr Sir Albert Bore (Birmingham), Cllr Norman Davies (Solihull MBC), Cllr Terry Dix (Staffordshire), Cllr Steve Eling (Sandwell MBC), Cllr Martin Heatley (Warwickshire), Cllr Stephen Inman (Worcester City), Cllr T James (Herefordshire), Cllr Mrs Jo Jones (Shrewsbury and Atcham), Cllr Elias Mattu (Wolverhampton), Cllr Malcolm Pate (Shropshire), Cllr Roger Phillips (Herefordshire), Cllr Ted Richards (Solihull MBC), Cllr Rex Roberts OBE (Staffordshire), Cllr Chris Saint (Stratford DC), Cllr J M Seymour (Telford and Wrekin), Cllr Sadie Smith (Sandwell MBC), Cllr John Taylor (Coventry), Cllr Paul Tilsley (Birmingham) Cllr J Williams (Herefordshire) and Cllr C Wimbush\* (East Staffordshire BC).

Mike Cherry (Federation of Small Businesses), Prof. Michael Clarke (West Midlands Higher Education Association), John Hart (WMBC - Chairman), Mike Hill (Confederation of West Midlands Chambers of Commerce), Steven McLaughlin\* (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors), Richard Moxon (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors), Tony Rodger\* (EEF West Midlands), Sarindar Singh Sahota (Asian Business Forum), Roger Stone (Country Land and Business Association), Roger Trotman (Engineering Employers Federation) and Jane Yardley (Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators).

Prof. David Ashton (OSG – Additional Place), Richard Bubb (Regional Action West Midlands), Roger Evans\* (OSG – Additional Place), Rev'd John Hall (West Midlands Faith Forum), Gerald Kells (West Midlands Sustainability Network), Elizabeth Newman (West Midlands Association of Parish Councils) and Peter Shirley (OSG – Additional Place).

\* Alternate member

Chris Bonnard (RAWM), Liz Charlton (GOWM), Denise Craig (FSB), Trudi Elliott (WMRA), P A Ellis (observer), Stephen Hind (WMLGA), Jeremy Howell (observer), Jo Kite (WMRA), Danny Lamb (WMRA), Roger Lawrence (AWM Board Member), Iain Neville (AWM), Ian Parry (observer), Nick Paul (AWM), Rose Poulter (WMRA), Nigel Summers (Regional Partnerships Secretary), Sandy Taylor (Birmingham City Council) and James Watkins (WMBC).

## **Appendix 2: Strategic Review of Equalities and Diversity - Recommendations**

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. 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.