

## **Agenda Item No. 10**

### **WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**Wednesday 5 April 2006**

#### **Regional Concordat**

#### **Report of the Director of Policy (WMRA)**

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1. **Purpose**

To advise the Assembly on progress in updating the Regional Concordat.

2. **Recommendation**

To note progress, provide comments and endorse the approach suggested to revise the WM Regional Concordat.

3. **Background**

Regional partners have committed themselves to reviewing the Concordat on a regular basis to ensure it is 'fit for purpose' and sufficiently in tune with the ever changing European, national, regional and local backdrops. The Assembly will recall that the purpose of the Concordat is to provide a framework for partnership working between regional organisations and for the integration of regional strategies. It is an agreement that reflects partners' respective roles and shared responsibilities, including the co-ordination and alignment of regional strategies.

Concordat partners:- West Midlands Regional Assembly, Advantage West Midlands, Government Office for the West Midlands, West Midlands Local Government Association, Regional Action West Midlands, West Midlands Business Council, Culture West Midlands , West Midlands Higher Education Association, West Midlands Learning and Skills Councils, Sustainability West Midlands, West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum, West Midlands Regional Observatory, West Midlands in Europe and Regen WM.

Concordat partners are working on the third Concordat, the current draft is attached for comments and endorsement of the broad approach being taken. Other Concordat partners will use March/April to share the draft with their respective Boards/constituencies. I am proposing that the Assembly Board signs off the final Concordat at its meeting on 2 June and it is launched formally at the Assembly's AGM on 12 July.

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# **WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL CONCORDAT 2006/draft version 4**

## **Introduction**

The West Midlands Regional Concordat is published and promoted jointly by the following regional organisations:

- West Midlands Regional Assembly
- Advantage West Midlands
- Government Office for the West Midlands
- West Midlands Local Government Association
- Regional Action West Midlands
- West Midlands Business Council
- Culture West Midlands
- West Midlands Higher Education Association
- West Midlands Learning and Skills Councils
- Sustainability West Midlands
- West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum
- West Midlands Regional Observatory
- West Midlands in Europe
- Regen WM

## **Purpose**

This Concordat provides a framework for partnership working between regional organisations and for the integration of regional strategies. It is an agreement that reflects partners' respective roles and shared responsibilities, including the co-ordination and alignment of regional strategies.

The Concordat partners believe that through communicating effectively and working more closely together, we can more efficiently meet our common aims to the benefit of the people of the West Midlands region.

The Concordat demonstrates to adjoining regions and Government that the West Midlands can speak with one voice and is committed to delivering a national agenda in the region.

The Concordat in this its third version must remain relevant to the context within which the partners are working. This Concordat will be kept under review and shall be formally reviewed in July 2008. It can be found on partners' websites.

We believe our individual strategies articulate the issues we need to address in the West Midlands and provide an integrated and complementary set of policies to tackle the challenges. We have opted to adopt this Concordat because it:-

- ❖ Is a clear and strong statement to our partners locally, sub-regionally, regionally, nationally and internationally that as partners we are committed to working together on matters of regional strategic importance.

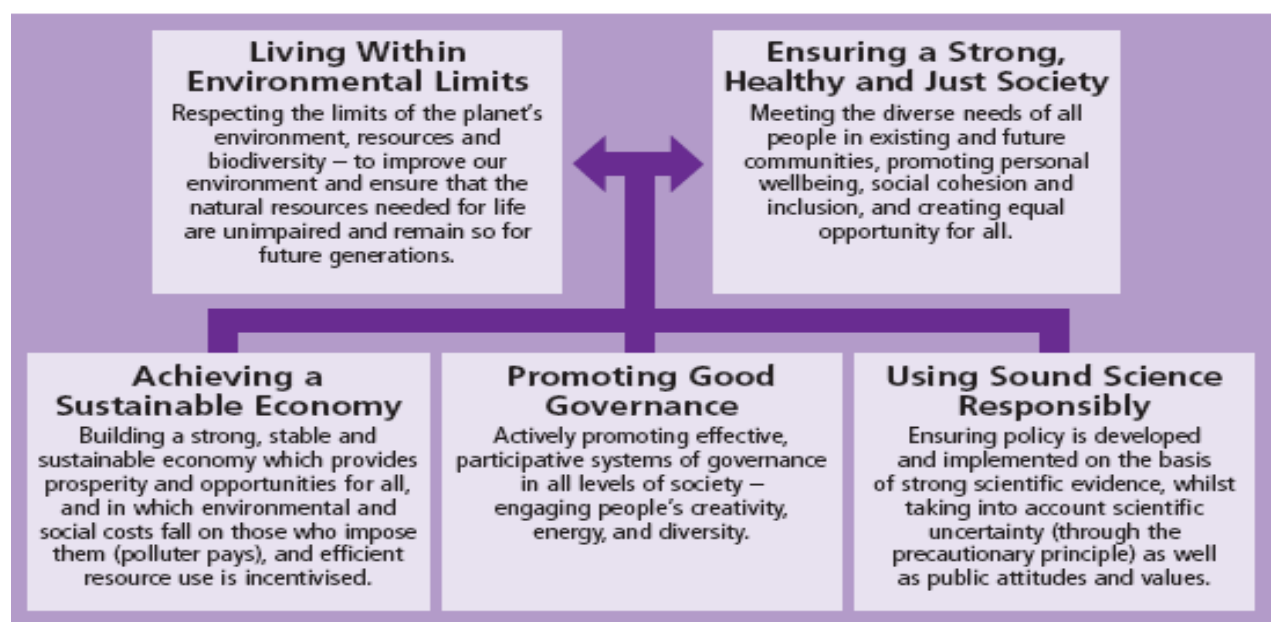
- ❖ Reflects the real world of constant change and challenge and gives the partners the flexibility to respond swiftly.
- ❖ Provides clarity about the high level aspirations and strategic priorities of the West Midlands.
- ❖ Commits partners to being open, co-ordinated, consultative and pro-active in our approach to securing our collective aspirations and strategic priorities.
- ❖ Identifies the partners and partnerships which are responsible and accountable for regional strategies, policy development and delivery.

## Our Collective Commitment to the West Midlands

We share an overarching commitment to sustainable development and reducing inequalities in the region. This means creating a better quality of life for all, now and in the future, and tackling environmental, economic, health and social issues in an integrated way to find co-ordinated solutions. By working together we aspire to create

**'An economically successful, outward looking, healthy and adaptable region, rich in culture and environment, where all people, working together, are able to meet their aspirations and needs without prejudicing the quality of life of future generations'**

The West Midlands Regional Sustainable Development Framework underpins this collective commitment. The RSDF expresses regional sustainable development objectives intended to maximise quality of life and well-being for all in the region by developing thriving sustainable communities, enhancing and protecting the environment, ensuring prudent and efficient use of natural resources, and developing a flourishing and diverse regional economy. The Framework outlines a process for the integration of these objectives into all regional policies and strategies.



The above diagram is taken from the National Sustainable Development Plan and provides the context for our regional work and the Regional Sustainable Development Framework (RSDF).

All our regional strategies underline our commitment to our sustainable development objectives set out in the RSDF. We also undertake that as each strategy is reviewed we will look to strengthen that commitment.

Climate change is one of the most severe problems we are facing today. No one person, organisation or community of interest can shape and deliver commitments to climate change alone. The Region will accommodate potential impacts of climate change in our long-term planning and review of strategies to help address and adapt to its consequences as part of our plans for a more sustainable future.

In annex X we have listed our Regional Strategies. From these strategies we have distilled the following strategic priorities, which provide the context to this Concordat:-

- **Urban Renaissance** - developing the Major Urban Areas in such a way that they can increasingly meet their own economic and social needs in order to counter the unsustainable outward movement of people and jobs facilitated by previous strategies;
- **Rural Renaissance**– addressing more effectively the major changes which are challenging the traditional roles of rural areas and the countryside;
- **Modernising and diversifying the economy and creating a dynamic business base** - ensuring that opportunities for growth are linked to meeting needs and that they help reduce social exclusion;
- **Upskilling the Region's workforce** - developing a highly qualified and appropriately skilled workforce driven by informed employer demand, responsive training providers and eager learners.
- **Promoting the Region's competitiveness and assets in a global setting** – communicating the region's strengths, opportunities and needs with confidence and coherence.
- **Securing and developing the Region's environment** - as an asset supporting our quality of life, economic and social aspirations and acting as a key component in regeneration.

Comment – the sixth strategic priority was not part of our RFA submission which focussed only on economic, transport and housing.

## **CONCORDAT 2006 - ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN THE WEST MIDLANDS REGION**

**The Concordat partner organisations have identified a shared set of values:-**

### **Shared Values:**

- Working together to **enhance and add value** to the work of regional organisations
- Promoting and **supporting diversity** in regional working
- Working **inclusively** with a wide range of economic, social, health and environmental partners **locally** and **sub-regionally**

- Working in a way that is **open and transparent** both to partners and to the public
- **Speaking up** for the West Midlands at every level
- Ensuring both political and civic **leadership** at regional level
- Promoting **good governance** within regional partnership working.
- Seeking to influence **European and National policy framework** within which we work
- Promoting a **reduction in inequalities** within the region.

## **Our New Commitment to Improving Partnership Working**

- **The Importance of Co-operation**

**We share a desire to improve the lives of people in the West Midlands and recognise the importance of working together on equal terms to achieve this goal.** Regional working is characterised by organisations with different accountabilities either as national agencies accountable to government, local government accountable to local electorates or regional organisations accountable to members or Boards. Nevertheless all partners are committed to working co-operatively towards our strategic priorities.

- **Delivering Agreed Strategies and Plans**

**As Concordat partners we are committed to working together to develop and deliver strategies and plans.** This commitment also includes working with sub regional and local partnerships, to ensure synergy between a top down and bottom up approach to strategy development and delivery. The Concordat partners support the key role of local and sub-regional partnerships – whether geographically or theme focussed, to deliver the regional strategic priorities. Through statutory process or regional determination we have created a series of strategies and action plans to drive forward regional work. We will continue to work hard to ensure that our strategies are aligned, coherent and mutually supportive to the benefit of the region.

- **Dynamic Partnerships for Delivery**

**The partners are committed to creating and supporting governance arrangements which are effective and transparent and can demonstrate the prudent use of public funds against the outcomes we seek to achieve.** In 2006 the region provided advice to Government on our funding priorities for economic development, housing and transport. Our advice demonstrates to Government that we are serious about breaking out of existing 'silo' funding arrangements and thinking. Our strategic priorities and our commitment to strong partnership arrangements underline and are critical to securing a more sophisticated and transparent approach to planning and sequencing of public and private investment in the West Midlands. We will keep our regional working arrangements under review, including the need to explore the option to establish a Forward Planning Executive to develop the ambitions set out in the WM Advice on Regional Funding Allocations (submitted in January 2006 weblink).

- **Working with National, European Sub-Regional, and Local Decision Makers.**

**By working together at the regional level we expect to make more impact and be more successful in meeting the region's needs.** The regional partners recognise the importance of the role of European national, sub-regional, and local governance in the life of the region and are committed to being a good partner at all these levels. We intend to make use of the strengths and role at each level but we will be strong in advocating the needs of the region and will

highlight those issues policies and programmes that we think are working well for the West Midlands as well as those that are not.

- **Strategic Leadership**

**As part of the Concordat process partners will undertake further work to find ways to better support leadership roles.**

Successful regions have effective leadership. In a region with diverse accountabilities we recognise that leadership is shared and who or which organisation steps up to the mark will reflect the time, place, issue and audience. This is not an easy concept to facilitate, but the partners are committed to bringing greater clarity to where leadership comes from and ensuring that leaders and ambassadors are supported in their roles. The high level of trust that now exists amongst regional partners bodes well for the future.

- **Addressing Inequalities**

**All Partners recognise that addressing inequality and social exclusion at all levels of society will provide clear economic, health and social benefits to individuals, private, public and voluntary sectors.** We will place emphasis on building upon the experience of organisations within the region by fostering networks which already play a critical role in raising awareness, promoting compliance and good practice on equality and human rights. To give greater prominence to this issue we will support the Equalities and Diversity/Social Inclusion Partnership under the umbrella of the Assembly.

- **Better Intelligence - Better Decision Making**

**Partners are committed to supporting and funding the development of better intelligence as the focal point for regional intelligence gathering, monitoring and analysis.**

The development of regional structures has prompted the need for better regional intelligence to inform decision making and monitor progress against agreed strategies and plans. The WM Regional Observatory has a key role to play, working in partnership with organisations who have their own monitoring systems in place, such as the Assembly and the WM Public Health Observatory, to assess the impact of the regional strategies. We must strive for an intelligence base which enables us to improve our decision making and ensures the WM is making its case on the basis of the best information and analysis we can achieve.

- **Planning for a Diverse Region**

**As we plan for the future the partners commit to embracing the increasing diversity of the West Midlands in the development, review and monitoring of strategies and delivery plans.** The West Midlands is the second most culturally diverse region in the UK and diversity represents both an opportunity and a challenge to this region. The diversity and size of our black and minority ethnic communities is increasing. As a Region our population is aging, but in our Major Urban Areas we have a growing population of under 25's. Through studies commissioned by Advantage WM and the Assembly's Equalities and Diversity Review it is clear that all organisations in the region will need to improve their planning, monitoring and delivery if we are to engage and support our increasingly diverse communities.

- **A forward looking region in Europe**

**The Partners are committed to working together on the EU and international agenda through the framework of the European Strategic Framework and International Strategy.** The progress of regional working on European and international activity during the last two year has been impressive. Taking its lead from the EU's overarching 'Lisbon' policy for increasing competitiveness, jobs and growth within member states the partners are concentrating on a small number of key policy fields and strategic projects. Partners are committed to a structured approach to working with other EU regions and to maximise the region's access to EU funding, in particular research and development funding, innovation and lifelong learning, in addition to more traditional 'structural' funding'

- **Respecting Partner's Capacity and Accountabilities**

**Each partner respects the role, agenda and constraints of each other.**

The strength of the Concordat lies in the ability of the partners to value the contribution that each can make to the region. Each partner commits to providing Concordat partners and others with the opportunity to be involved in the development and delivery of the strategies which they lead on. Therefore consultation processes and release of documentation will be issued in a timely fashion to enable co-operative working between stakeholder partners. The Concordat partners are committed to making regional work as effective as possible and will seek to meet standards in the way we work as partners that at least equal those we are required to meet as individual organisations. The capacity and role of Concordat partners does not fully represent the range of Government policy or strategic issues which impact on the West Midlands. But the Concordat offers a style of working and the opportunity to focus on such policy and issues and to draw in other partners.

## **Measuring Progress with the new Concordat**

This Concordat sets out a framework for partnership working which we believe will facilitate the delivery of our regional priorities. To assist us in measuring progress against the strategic priorities we have commissioned the West Midlands Regional Observatory to develop a contextual monitoring system designed to furnish a baseline and ultimately provide a consistently based commentary on future Regional progress towards Urban and Rural Renaissance. The Observatory's monitoring frameworks for the Economic Strategy, Skills Strategy and State of the Region Report will provide useful sources of information. The Annual Monitoring Report on the Regional Spatial Strategy will also assist, as will the Health of the Region Report from the West Midlands Public Health Observatory.

## **Putting the Concordat into Practice**

This Concordat makes a series of strong statements about our **collective commitments** and **shared values** for partnership working. To put these into practise each Concordat partner will ensure that Concordat partners when reviewing or updating their strategies or plans provide the opportunity for Concordat partners to participate in a facilitated discussion – the purpose being to secure an integrated input unconstrained by policy silos. We will also provide a web link to the Concordat on their website. In addition each partner will provide an annual report to the Assembly setting out the contribution each as made to sustainable development in the Region.

## ***Annexes To The Concordat***

Description of each signatory organisation and website

Description of each Partnership – Assembly's and others.

The diagram of regional relationships.

List of strategies and websites.