

ADVANTAGE WEST MIDLANDS

NON CONFIDENTIAL

Minutes of the 106th Board meeting held on 28 October 2008

Present:

Nick Paul Chairman
Jas Bains
Dr David Brown
Brendan Connor
Cllr Roger Lawrence
Angela Maxwell
Sue Prince
Cllr Diane Rayner
Prof Michael Sterling
Cllr Ken Taylor
David Smith

Executive:

Michael Laverty Chief Executive
Michael Crich Corporate Director, Resources
Tim Gebbels Corporate Director, Strategy and Communications
Richard Hutchins Corporate Director, Economic Development
Mark Pearce Corporate Director, Economic Regeneration
Karen Yeomans Corporate Director, Operations

Apologies:

Gerard Coyne
John Crabtree
Cllr Richard Hyde
Michael Oakes
Trudi Elliott Regional Director, Government Office West Midlands

In attendance:

Sue Marwa Board Support Executive
Dylan Murphy Head of Board Support

ITEM	DETAILS	ACTION
1.	Welcome	
1.1	The Chairman and Brendan Connor welcomed members to Millbrook.	
2.	Minutes of the last meeting	
2.1	The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 30 th September 2008 subject to clarification that the report referred to in minute number 14.4 had been the <i>Tackling Rural Disadvantage</i> Report by Dr Stuart Burgess.	

3.	Matters arising	
3.1	<u>Business Support Simplification Programme</u> It was noted that progress had been made in enabling ICT support though this issue would require ongoing attention.	
4.	Item 4 Confidential	
5.	Declarations of Interest	
5.1	Jas Bains declared an interest in item 17 (minute number 19) as Adrian Passmore, Chief Executive of RegenWM, was a member of Ashram Housing Association's Board.	
5.2	David Smith declared an interest in item 8 (minute number 10) as a member of Warwickshire County Cricket Club.	
5.3	Roger Lawrence declared an interest in item 8 (minute number 10) as a member of Warwickshire County Cricket Club.	
6.	Declarations of items of any other business	
6.1	The Chairman declared an additional item updating the Board on the appointment of a new Chairman and Board member.	
7.	Chairman's Report	
7.1	The Chairman presented his Report and drew attention to the following items:	
7.2	<u>BERR Select Committee</u> Bryan Jackson and Jeff Moore of the East Midlands Development Agency (emda) and the Chairman gave evidence before the Committee on 14 September. The Chairman had been well prepared and feedback from the Committee Chairman had been positive.	
7.3	Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)' relationships with business varied across the country and the Chambers of Commerce evidence to the Committee could not present a clear national opinion.	

<p>7.4</p> <p>7.5</p> <p>7.6</p> <p>7.7</p> <p>7.8</p> <p>7.9</p>	<p>The Committee's report was expected before Christmas, following clarification of the position around the sub national review (SNR) and the publication of RDAs' impact evaluation results.</p> <p>The report was likely to have a significant impact on the development of Conservative Party policy regarding RDAs. The Agency was engaging individual Conservative MPs within the region, including Peter Luff. Emda was also working with individual MPs, including Alan Duncan.</p> <p>It was agreed that the key messages developed in preparing for the Select Committee would be circulated to the Board. These key messages should be concise and presented in credit card size form. Board members should also be provided with key negative points expressed about RDAs and evidence to counter these points.</p> <p><u>RDA Chairs and Chief Executives' Seminar</u> Chairs and Chief Executives had identified policy priorities to communicate to Government to inform the budget setting process. It was agreed that the letter to the Secretary of State outlining proposals aimed at enabling RDAs and other Government agencies to respond to the changing economic circumstances would be circulated to the Board.</p> <p><u>Meeting with Sir John Chisholm</u> The QinetiQ Quantum Technology Partnership was proceeding but progress had slowed. The relationship with the Agency remained good however and further thought was being given to defining deliverables.</p> <p><u>Prime Minister's Visit</u> It was encouraging that Birmingham was the first location selected for the Prime Minister's meetings with the business community. It was noted that the issue of "void rates" had been raised at the meeting and the Agency would continue to press for changes in this area (particularly around new build).</p>	<p>Tim Gebbels / Board Support</p> <p>Board Support</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Chief Executive's Report</p>	
<p>8.1</p> <p>8.2</p>	<p>The Chief Executive presented his Report and drew attention to the following items:</p> <p><u>Scale of the Challenge</u> Some of the early results would be presented at the Agency's conference in November and a further report would be submitted to the Board in December/January.</p>	<p>Tim Gebbels / Board Support</p>

<p>8.3</p> <p>8.4</p> <p>8.5</p>	<p><u>Zones and Cluster Programmes</u> A further report on programmes' evaluation results would be submitted to a future meeting. The cluster results looked particularly positive and the Agency would be able to signpost the evaluation results at the conference but would not be able to present detailed results as they were embargoed until all RDAs' results had been verified. There was ongoing debate around "persistence values" as the calculation of the benefits of certain projects did not give an accurate picture of the genuine benefits achieved as they were calculated over too short a period. This was particularly true of land and property developments and jobs created.</p> <p><u>Spotlight Awards</u> The Agency's Individual Spotlight Award Winner for September had gone to Lynsey Wyke for organising the West Midlands Cultural Olympiad Launch held at Ironbridge Gorge Museum on 26 September 2008.</p> <p>The September Team Award had gone to the Communications Team (Economic Regeneration) of Sarah, Nyons, Head of Communications; Carolyn Smith, Communications Manager; Phil Brown, Communications Manager; Lisa Montgomery, Communications Manager and Sarah Duggan, Communications Manager.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>Item 9 Confidential</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>Item 10 Confidential</p>	
<p>11.</p>	<p>Advantage West Midlands Response To Economic Shocks – Non-confidential</p>	
<p>11.1</p>	<p>The Board noted that a national Regional Economic Council had been created which would be jointly chaired by the Chancellor and Secretary of State for Business. A regional West Midlands Economic Council chaired by the Regional Minister had also been created to feed into this national body. A Midlands Task Force was also to be established. This body would co-ordinate the response to major job losses and was to be based on the MG Rover Taskforce model. The Agency would lead the work of the two regional bodies on behalf of the Regional Minister.</p>	

<p>11.2</p> <p>11.3</p> <p>11.4</p> <p>11.5</p> <p>11.6</p> <p>11.7</p>	<p>As well as having structures to deal with the impact of the economic downturn (leading into the national structure), the Agency had developed structures to deal with one-off economic shocks.</p> <p>It was agreed that thought would be given to the delivery of media training to front-line staff and Board members</p> <p>It was noted that the Agency submitted a monthly report to BERR including anecdotal evidence from the region of the impact of the economic downturn on businesses. A good evidence base was essential in understanding the situation; discussion with the Observatory was ongoing and Jobcentre Plus provided information on a monthly basis. More thought was required on how the information gathered could be converted to intelligence which could inform activity.</p> <p>It was agreed that the monthly update reports submitted to BERR would be presented to the Board.</p> <p>The Board noted the proposed procedure for responding to incidents resulting in regional economic shock as outlined in the submitted report.</p> <p>The Board noted that this procedure would be taken into account when any plans resulting from the current economic downturn were developed.</p>	<p>Tim Gebbels</p>
<p>12.</p>	<p>Business Support Simplification Programme – Progress Update – Non-confidential</p>	
<p>12.1</p> <p>12.2</p> <p>12.3</p>	<p>The Board noted that the approved portfolio of products and <i>Solutions for Business</i> brand had been launched on 23 October. The Government wanted to achieve national consistency and standardise Business Link services. The Agency would continue to seek to influence developments at the national level to ensure that the significant improvements made in the region were not lost through national standardisation and would continue to stress the need for ICT support.</p> <p>The Agency would take a flexible approach to ensure that the portfolio of products worked for regional businesses.</p> <p>The Board considered the submitted report and noted the direction of travel of the Business Support Simplification Programme.</p>	

13.	Update on Annual Conference – Non-confidential	
13.1	The Board noted the progress on planning for the annual conference as outlined in the submitted report, including the following points:	
13.2	The breakfast event was now being arranged to align with the first meeting of the Regional Minister’s Economic Council.	
13.3	A conference website was now live. Copies of all speeches, case studies etc. presented at the conference would be made available on the website after the event.	
13.4	A market research company had been engaged to capture conference delegates’ views of the event.	
13.5	It was agreed that conference delegates would be provided with copies of the Birmingham Post supplement.	Tim Gebbels
14.	Stakeholder Survey Results - Non-confidential	
14.1	The Corporate Director, Strategy and Communications presented the results of the stakeholder and partner survey 2008 and the Board noted in particular that:	
14.2	Gauging stakeholders and partners’ views on the Agency’s performance was an important element of the Excellence Model.	
14.3	The response size had been 100 per cent larger than 2007 and the rate had been 34 per cent (with a total of 144 respondents).	
14.4	The three biggest categories of respondent were local authorities, the higher/further education sector and private sector organisations/business.	
14.5	Some improvements had been achieved in increasing stakeholders’ understanding of the Agency’s policies around skills but further work was required in this area.	
14.6	The result for the key overall question “how satisfied or dissatisfied would you say you are with the overall performance of AWM?” was broadly consistent with the 2007 result. When broken down by respondent type, the results from the education sector had improved significantly, private sector results showed a slight decline and the results from local authority respondents had polarised. BMG were conducting follow-up interviews to better understand these results.	

<p>14.7</p> <p>14.8</p> <p>14.9</p> <p>14.10</p> <p>14.11</p> <p>14.12</p> <p>14.13</p> <p>14.14</p> <p>14.15</p>	<p>The results showed that face-to-face contact was critical in shaping stakeholders' opinions of the Agency. This message was being stressed to Agency staff.</p> <p>Significant steps had been taken to improve access to appropriate contacts within the Agency.</p> <p>Qualitative analysis was being undertaken to consider respondents' comments. In many cases, views were driven by very specific issues.</p> <p>The results displayed a step-change in performance between 2006 and 2007 which had been maintained in 2008. The strong performance in 2008 was encouraging as this had been achieved without large-scale consultation on the Regional Economic Strategy (as had been the case in 2007).</p> <p>The Agency had contacted clusters rather than individual businesses. The Agency also received testimonials from individual companies and the Improvement Plan would recognise this wider response from the private sector. It was agreed that thought would be given to how these testimonials could be captured centrally and published on the website.</p> <p>The Board considered the submitted report and presentation and noted:</p> <p>i) The results of the survey and the positive direction of travel.</p> <p>ii) The links between the survey results and the Agency's Aiming for Excellence Improvement Plan.</p> <p>iii) The plans to communicate the survey results to stakeholders and partners.</p>	<p>Tim Gebbels</p>
<p>15.</p>	<p>Item 15 Confidential</p>	
<p>16.</p>	<p>Item 16 Confidential</p>	
<p>17.</p>	<p>Item 17 Confidential</p>	

18.	Equality and Diversity Action Plan Progress – Non-confidential	
18.1	The Board noted that the Diversity Champions Group played an important role in embedding consideration of equality and diversity issues within the Agency and Cllr Rayner reported that she was encouraged by the significant engagement of staff (ensuring that the Plan was about people and was not just a paper exercise).	
18.2	The Agency would be celebrating Diversity Week at the end of November.	
18.3	Specific outcomes were outlined in the detailed Plan which sat behind the report. It was agreed that the full report would be circulated to the Board. It was also noted that the Race for Opportunity benchmarking survey had been undertaken and this would provide a measurement of the Agency's progress.	
18.4	The Board noted the progress made towards delivery of the Equality and Diversity Action Plan as outlined in the submitted report.	
19.	RegenWM Annual Report 2007-08 – Non-confidential	
19.1	The Board noted RegenWM's achievements during 2007-08, noting in particular the importance of building capacity through the placement of 40 graduates in regeneration organisations.	
19.2	It was noted that the newly formed Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) would have oversight of regeneration best practice and RegenWM would look to align activity with that of HCA during 2008-09.	
19.3	The Board noted the submitted report.	
20.	Item 20 Confidential	
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21.	Any other business	
21.1	<u>Appointment of Chairman and new Board Member</u> The Chairman reported that interviews for the Chairman position would be held in November/December. An announcement on the local government appointee to the Board to take up their post from 14 December was awaited.	