

**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY  
Full Assembly Meeting**

**23 October 2009**

**Report of the CEO and Company Secretary**

---

**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide the Assembly with an update on general corporate and financial issues.

**2. Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 The Assembly is asked to note the details of this report and in particular: -

**[3] Note the 2009-10 Q2 Progress Report for submission to GOWM.**

**[4] Note the progress with SNR matters.**

**[5] Note the intention to prepare a publication recording the achievements of the Assembly**

**[6] Note that the January meeting of the Assembly will be postponed to a date in March 2010, such meeting to be the last meeting of the full Assembly before dissolution.**

**[3] 2009-10 Business Plan; Q2 Progress Report**

- 3.1 The Q2 Progress report has been submitted to GOWM and a copy of the report is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report.

- 3.2 Some particular matters I should like to draw to members attention in the report are as follows. As members will no doubt have anticipated, the report has a heavy focus on the WMRSS, in respect of both the Phase 2 Examination in Public and the Phase 3 Consultation on the Preferred Options. As members are also aware the scrutiny role has been wound down and we have taken the opportunity to redirect the staffing resources into preparation for transition.

- 3.3 Members will also note that we anticipate that because of some vacant posts not being filled (due to the anticipation of budget cuts next year) there will be significant budget variations on the staffing budget and, in particular, that the work on the new Strategy for the West Midlands will mean inevitable changes to the previous RSS programme.
- 3.4 Our work programme has changed in other ways. For example Transport - this has had a strong focus this year on both the RFA programme and now on the new Developing a Sustainable Transport System (DaSTS). The OPEN Project is allowing us to continue our Equality and Diversity role through European funding. The savings we are making on salaries will allow us to provide a training budget for our staff previously that we had to cut at the beginning of the year.
- 3.5 Members will see that this has also meant that our risk register has also been significantly altered, as some matters which presented significant risks previously relating to the EIP and the Phase 3 Options have now elapsed as that has passed.

#### **[4] SNR Matters**

- 4.1 The Bill was received on 13<sup>th</sup> October and is expected to receive Royal Assent in the near future. The elements of the Bill which set up the Leaders Boards are likely to come into effect almost immediately upon Royal Assent. The draft regulations already published are also likely to be confirmed and come into effect shortly after commencement. This does not change the date given previously for dissolution of the Assembly, but will enable matters to be clarified and set up so that a smooth handover can be achieved.
- 4.2 In preparation for the SNR implementation the Government has published a Policy statement on regional strategies and Guidance on the establishment of Leaders Boards which is out for consultation until 30<sup>th</sup> October. This is attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 4.3 At the AGM of the WMLGA which immediately preceded the Assembly AGM on 6<sup>th</sup> July, the WMLGA agreed to change its name to the West Midlands Leaders Board and to adopt a new constitution which they then recommended to the WMLB which met on 13<sup>th</sup> July. This was agreed and the WMLB is now the representative body for local government in the region. The Chairman of the WMLB is Cllr Ken Taylor; Cllr Mike Whitby (Birmingham) and Cllr Roger Phillips (Herefordshire) are vice chairs. Provision is also to be made for a vice chair from a district council.
- 4.4 CLG has maintained its commitment to fund Leaders Boards to prepare the regional strategies, and the Bill contains powers to fund

leaders boards for this activity. However, in the current financial climate all previous commitments to funding are being examined, and it is not known when CLG will be able to confirm the level of funding available for 2010-11; although it is hoped that it will not be significantly lower than the indicative figure Assemblies were told to expect, of the 2009-10 funding less 10% efficiency cuts.

- 4.5 In the West Midlands, the Joint Strategy and Investment Board (JSIB) continues to meet in shadow form. Representations had been made from the business sector to have a place on the JSIB, particularly following on from the formation of the merged business representative organisation; Business Voice WM. When this was considered at previous meetings certain caveats were laid down to the business sector. Briefly, the JSIB required assurance that the business representative brought a collective business perspective to the JSIB and was able to communicate back into the wider business community. This assurance has now been received, and so AWM have agreed that one of the seats they have been allocated will be offered to Business Voice WM; their Chairman, Barrie Williams, has been nominated as their representative and we believe he will take up his seat from the November meeting of the JSIB.
- 4.6 The likely position of the Conservative party towards regional planning was confirmed in a recent letter from shadow communities secretary Caroline Spelman MP to Conservative-controlled local authorities. The letter, attached as **Appendix 3**, confirmed the intentions to abolish RSSs and regional planning bodies as well as regionally set housing targets. Also in danger of revocation would be the Government's plan to transfer regional housing and planning powers to Regional Development Agencies and Regional Leaders' Boards, Caroline Spelman, MP repeated this intention in the House of Commons when the Bill was debated on October 13th.

## **[5] Assembly Dissolution**

- 5.1 There is a great deal of work taking place to ensure a smooth transition from the Assembly to the West Midlands Leaders Board. The WMLB/WMRA Strategic Management Team have a Strategic Action Plan in place to guide the development of a high level 3 Year Strategic Plan and a 2010-11 Business Plan and Budget for WMLB, covering the integrated services of the WMLB and WMRA.
- 5.2 The Plan aims to deliver a 30% reduction in funding over the next 3 years and as such will identify where changes in the establishment may be required. The starting assumption is for CLG and local authority funding at the 2009-10 level less 10% efficiency cuts.
- 5.3 The Secretariat also has a Change Management Action Plan in place to prompt and guide the practical actions that need to happen to

implement identified and agreed organisational change and the Board will receive a in January 2010 setting out a timetable of activity and formal approvals for Assembly dissolution.

- 5.4 The Board has agreed to mark the end of the West Midlands Regional Assembly with a publication that looks back over the life of this Assembly; reflecting on the many successes and highlighting the legacy it leaves in respect of successful partnership working and regional collaboration. This will be produced at minimum cost, with the large majority of the editing, design and production being carried out in-house by the communications team. A small print run of the final document will be produced so that all Assembly members may receive a copy at the final meeting and we will be made available electronically on the website.

**[6] Final Meeting of the Full Assembly**

- 6.1 Following this October meeting, the Assembly would then normally meet again in January 2010; however, as the Assembly's responsibilities will transfer to the Leaders Board at the end of March 2010 the Board have agreed that the January full Assembly meeting is delayed until early March 2010 and that meeting will take place in Lichfield. This will be the final meeting of the full Assembly before dissolution.
- 6.2 The Board will of course meet in January to approve the dissolution action plan and any transfer issues ahead of the final Assembly meeting.

**Olwen Dutton**  
Chief Executive