

Notes of European Strategy Board meeting held 18 September 2009 at Birmingham Council House Extension

PRESENT:

Members

Cllr Sir Albert Bore (WMLB/CoR) – Chair, David Brown (Chair, West Midlands in Europe), David Burton (CWMCC), Mike Cherry (FSB), Chris Crean (WMRSF), Tim Gebbels (AWM), Rebecca Harding (on behalf of Malcolm Harbour MEP), John Ison (on behalf of Nikki Sinclair MEP), Steve Kennett (GOWM), Cllr Roger Lawrence (WMLGA), Doug Mahoney (UKTI WM/AWM), Isabella Moore (COMTEC), Tatiana Panteli (EU Connects), Cllr Ken Taylor (WMLB), Cllr Paul Tilsley (WMLB), Simon Topman (CWMCC)

Officers

Jon Bloomfield (AWM), Olwen Dutton (WMLB/WMRA), Laird Ryan (WMRA, Chair European Strategy Social Cohesion Group), Glynis Whiting (WMiE), Patrick Willcocks (Chair REFPG), Louise Chilton (WMLB)

Item	Discussion and Decision	Action
1.	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Philip Bradbourn MEP, Brendan Connor (AWM), Malcolm Harbour MEP, Esther Knight (WMRA), Liz Lynne MEP, Roger McKenzie (UNISON), Paul Richards (WMHEA), Julie Robson (LSC), Nikki Sinclair MEP, Cllr David S Smith (WMLB)</p>	
2.	<p>Notes of 3 July meeting and matters arising</p> <p>The notes were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.</p> <p>Matters Arising</p> <p><u>Item 2 notes of February meeting</u> – JB to update the Board on the Midlands KIC bid at item 7 of the day’s agenda. Lobbying issues had been dealt with.</p> <p><u>Item 3 Elected Representatives Report</u> – all inaccuracies in the paper had been rectified.</p> <p><u>Item 6 – Progress on Priority 1 (Single Market) Working Group</u> – it was unknown whether actions had been carried out. A general update on the group had been provided for the summary of priority working group progress that was tabled at the meeting.</p> <p><u>Item 8 West Midlands in Europe: Delivering the European Strategy</u> – requested changes to the report had been made.</p>	
	<p>For Information</p>	
3.	<p>Update on the European Union Institutions</p> <p>Further to the Elected Representatives Report presented at the 3 July ESB meeting, it was now possible to provide further details on committee</p>	

	<p>appointments; it was noted that membership of key committees had been covered very well by West Midlands MEPs.</p> <p>The situation with regard to the additional MEP, raised at the July meeting by Philip Bushill-Matthews, had now been clarified. If and when the Lisbon Treaty was signed there would be one additional MEP returned to the West Midlands. Although the official line was that no decision had yet been made on the allocation of the additional seat, using the D'Hondt method of party-list proportional representation as used in the UK at the European elections it was possible to predict that there would be another Conservative MEP, Anthea McIntyre, who had been placed seventh in the West Midlands at the 2009 elections.</p> <p><u>European Commission Work Programme 2009 and Policy Strategy 2010:</u> although President Barroso had been confirmed as President of the European Commission for another term, the programme of the new Commission post December was still unknown and it was suggested that an update be provided to the next ESB meeting on 27 November. It was suggested that the Commission Work Programme would not have any substance until the New Year, when the Commissioners would be in place. Comments made during discussion included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair of the Committee on Foreign Affairs is Gabriela Albertini who had much contact with the Region between 1996 and 2004/5 as Mayor of Milan, Birmingham's twin city • Articles on the EU had appeared recently in the Daily Telegraph which lacked regional perspective and it was suggested that the ESB should investigate the possibility of approaching the Daily Telegraph to include debate at regional level • The new Chair of the Regional Development Committee was Danuta Hübner, previously the Commissioner for DG Regio. <p>The report was noted.</p>	WMRA
<p>4.</p>	<p>Progress in nominating Committee of the Regions representatives for the Region, 2010-2014</p> <p>It was reported that The LGA Executive had agreed the list of CoR nominations and these names had now been forwarded to CLG to begin the journey through Government. West Midlands nominations going forward are Cllr Sir Albert Bore (Birmingham) and Cllr Judith Pearce (Wychavon) as full members and Cllr Martin Heatley (Warwickshire) as alternate member. Seats would be taken up in January 2010.</p> <p>Members were reminded that previously West Midlands nominations had to be changed at the last minute at the request of a government minister, so it was possible that these nominations could still change. If so, ESB members would be kept informed.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>	WMRA
<p>5.</p>	<p>Significant events for the coming six months</p> <p>The Board was presented with a summary of forthcoming events in the Region and Brussels including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ESB annual conference on 2 October would include a wide range of activities including work carried out on investigating European regional 	

	<p>strategies, an update on the KIC bid and a look at the OPEN project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Days 2009 in Brussels, with 250 free events. The West Midlands together with the Lisbon Regions Network would hold a seminar around the theme of creative cities • A flyer was tabled giving details of the Open Days local event that would take place in the Region for the first time on 14 October and would be introduced by Cllr Paul Tilsley. The event would concentrate on digital and creative industries with colleagues from Barcelona and Berlin taking part to share knowledge on developing digital districts • Activities taking place in Brussels included a political debate on the future European answer to the automotive crisis, a West Midlands Chambers visit to Brussels, a Healthy Ageing seminar hosted for Aston University and a high level European Parliament seminar to profile the ceramics industry in the West Midlands, hosted by Malcolm Harbour MEP and Michael Cashman MEP. <p>It was agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To note the contents of the report • To take part in the events highlighted by contacting the relevant officers. 	ALL
6.	<p>Progress in developing new regional arrangements as a response to SNR, and implications for regional European working</p> <p>Considerable progress had been made since the February ESB meeting and WMLGA had moved into the West Midlands Leaders Board, chaired by Cllr Ken Taylor. This significant move had taken place in response to the review of sub-national economic development and regeneration review, and the WMLB was now a major player in making local government a significant force to be reckoned with.</p> <p>The challenge for the West Midlands in the economic downturn was extremely significant and it was essential in these circumstances to get the Region's Single Integrated Strategy correct. The WMLB would produce a manifesto as a platform for the Region's work. Although the ESB would disappear with the Assembly's demise at the end of March 2010, European working would continue; the Brussels Office must continue and thrive and it was necessary to ensure that the successor to the European Strategy Board was fit for purpose to provide drive and direction in future.</p> <p>KT as Chair of the WMLB stressed that all leaders were behind the need to have joint working on Europe and that the WMLB wanted to look at a manifesto that would incorporate the European Strategy, focusing on worklessness and future manufacturing in the West Midlands. Work was planned with the East Midlands to see how this could be moved forward. It was necessary to create a dynamic group that would sell the West Midlands strongly, and be able to influence at the highest levels, well before next year's election and any possible changes to the regional structures after that.</p> <p>The verbal report was noted.</p>	

	For Discussion	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Update on progress with the Climate Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) application</p> <p>Board members were updated with a short summary of the process and content of the Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) application that had been submitted under the climate change category to the European Institute of Innovation and Technology on 27 August. This had been coordinated by AWM on behalf of a range of potential partners including major universities, large and small companies and major public authorities including Birmingham and Coventry City Councils. A network of six regions had been developed, known collectively as the Regional Implementation Community (RIC). Rhone Alpes had also been a potential partner but had been forced to withdraw due to political reasons.</p> <p>University partners included the Climate Change Unit at Imperial College headed by Sir Brian Hoskins, one of the top European authorities on climate change, which agreed to work together on a common bid. The UK Government (DECC and BIS) had expressed its support for the collaboration.</p> <p>There would be opportunities for RIC partners to be involved in academic projects around the four thematic strains of the Climate-KIC on (i) climate science; (ii) low carbon cities (iii) bio-renewable processes and (iv) integrated water management. Although a four year bid, 7-15 year projects were envisaged and it was important to emphasise that this was not a short-term initiative. The outcome would be known in mid December. JB was on the transition team. Meetings were due to take place with UKREP in Brussels in October and with Malcolm Harbour MEP about lobbying.</p> <p>European partners were due to visit the Region on 21/22 October so links were being made between the six European regions irrespective of the outcome. If the bid was successful there would be a further six months to set up arrangements.</p> <p>Over 20 bids had been submitted and it was likely that 2 or 3 would be chosen, one from each area of ITC, sustainable energy and climate change. Regional organisations also had interests in two other bids on sustainable energy, but the Climate-KIC bid was a collective regional effort.</p> <p>The ESB expressed its appreciation to JB and his colleagues from across the agencies for the amount of work put into the bid.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>International experience of developing regional integrated strategies: learning from European best practice</p> <p>GW gave a powerpoint presentation based on the paper going to the Joint Strategic Investment Board (JSIB) on 22 September outlining interim findings from research carried out by West Midlands in Europe to explore what might be learned from the development of Single Integrated Regional Strategies across Europe. Next steps included exploring sources of additional funding, including a possible response to the call just published</p>	

	<p>by the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON) for new studies and research which likely to offer relevant funding opportunities. This would mean working with two other regions and submitting an expression of interest by 11 November 2009.</p> <p>During discussion the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The planned WMLB manifesto must take notice of and be aligned with European best practice and it would be necessary to take forward a structural fund policy that would deliver in the interests of the Region with a radically different agenda. It was considered the right time in the Region to align with other regions. • As the work had already been carried out it would be foolish not to make an ESPON expression of interest; €200,000 was available for advice and information without matchfunding. • It was important to develop a strategy for the Region before finding the funds to support it, rather than chasing funding for the sake of it. • This would be a hugely important opportunity to compare with other regions and to look at specific issues such as how business support was delivered in other regions. • It was suggested that a small group meet to discuss the Region’s brief and methods of working. It was known that the National Royal Town Planning Institute was keen to offer support. • It was also necessary to consider how this should be taken forward and mainstreamed and to decide who would carry out the work. It must be under the auspices of the JSIB. • It was important to involve all stakeholders including the private sector. • Decisions must be made on what type of regions to align with, ie most successful/dynamic/similar to the West Midlands. It was suggested that Flanders might be a starting point. • There is a risk that people may think that Regional government is being put back on the agenda and therefore there is strength in looking at regions with similar governance structures to that of the West Midlands. • Following identification of partners a seminar or event to be organised in the Jacques Delors (Committee of the Regions) building in Brussels. <p>It was agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To add to the JSIB recommendations to say that this had been discussed by and approved by the ESB. • OD to raise at 22 September JSIB meeting. • OD to take forward with the WMLB. • To set up a working group to discuss the Region’s brief for the ESPON bid and methods of working. 	<p>OD</p> <p>OD</p> <p>OD</p> <p>WMRA</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Progress on Priority 4 (Social Cohesion) Working Group LR gave a powerpoint presentation on recent progress including membership activities and next steps. LR had nearly completed his contract and he was thanked and commended for all his work on a difficult and fragmented set of objectives.</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>EU Connects Update Report TP introduced herself as the manager of EU Connects covering Julia Buckley’s maternity leave.</p>	

	<p>The unit had been very successful over the last 8 months. The economic downturn had caused major problems for regional organisations which had reflected on their ability to bid for big transnational funds such as INTERREG due to lack of matchfunding and knowledge about funding and transnational working. This was being addressed by training events with a major focus on rural areas and capacity building.</p> <p>" A European Journey", a booklet of case studies regarding organisations which had successfully applied for EU-funding transnational projects, was tabled at the meeting.</p> <p>A total of 452 new project ideas had been registered over the last six months, with 187 of those being from rural areas. There was still a lack of strategic projects but the team was working on this and encouraging organisations to work with each other. Successful submissions for environmental funding had been made, with 38% of applications from rural areas.</p> <p>Other points to note included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Connects works closely with other the National Contact Points for the different funding programmes, regional organisations and WMiE • The latest (September) edition of Highlights the joint EUC/WMiE newsletter was tabled • EUC was building a database of successful European organisations that the unit would like to work with. • Thirteen bids had been submitted to the Marie Curie Fund which if successful would bring in more than €5 million to the Region. <p>The report was noted. The ESB was happy with the unit's success and the total of €6 million brought into the Region justified the initial decision to go down the route of setting up a project support centre.</p>	
<p>11.</p>	<p>Any Other Business There was no other business.</p>	
<p>12.</p>	<p>FUTURE MEETINGS The following future meetings were noted:</p> <p>Friday 27 November at 1100 at the Regional Partnership Centre</p> <p>2010 Friday 19 February 2010 at 1100 (half term – meeting date agreed and noted by members) Friday 25 June 2010 at 1100 Friday 17 September 2010 at 1100 Friday 26 November 2010 at 1100</p> <p>Members were reminded that as part of the changes in regional working it was likely that membership would be reviewed at some point over the next few months, but were asked to note the dates; they would be kept informed of changes.</p>	<p>WMRA</p>