



Strategic Review 2004/5

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

in the

WEST MIDLANDS

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The aim of this review was to examine how equality and diversity issues were being approached within the West Midlands and the extent to which regional partners are working together. We believe that one of the most important assets of this region is the people who live and work here and that we must take the opportunity to build on the strengths that such a rich diverse mix offers. Addressing the equality and diversity agendas will provide clear business and social benefits to individuals and to the region as a whole.
- 1.2 We are impressed at the amount of work that is currently being undertaken to value diversity and ensure equality of opportunity within the region. This report, as all such reports do, focuses on where we believe improvements can be made but it is not intended to give an impression of a failing or uncaring region. On the contrary, this region has a good history of recognising and supporting the needs of different communities of interest. We believe that this review and final report will provide an opportunity for the West Midlands to build on these experiences and to lead the English Regions in their approach to the sometimes difficult and complex areas of equalities and diversity.
- 1.3 The terms of reference (see Appendix 1) agreed at the start of the review were challenging. They have formed the basis of the review with additional issues considered as appropriate. It has not been possible to identify a preferred form for the regional presence of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) although the review has started a process of regional debate (see paragraph 13.6).
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is not to summarise all the evidence presented to us but to discuss those issues that we have identified as being crucial to the region and to make recommendations to assist future development. These issues have underpinned the evidence presented to us and were encapsulated by Chris Bonnard, Regional Action West Midlands (RAWM), who identified four challenges for the region as ensuring
- Clarity of definition and understanding
 - Corporate commitment at the most senior level possible and the building of equality and diversity into agencies' philosophy and values
 - Sustainable resourcing
 - Recognition of the differences between and within communities and the dangers of labelling individuals and groups
- 1.5 It should be emphasized that this review is intended to be a starting point for future regional activity providing recommendations for structures and priorities that will be required to be implemented by all partners working together.
- 1.6 The recommendations made in this report are intended to provide an environment in which regional partners can work together to address the four challenges for the region (see paragraph 1.4). One of the initial tasks of the West Midlands Regional Assembly's Equality and Diversity Director (see paragraph 11.17) will be the development of a work plan including detailed timescales and milestones. We would anticipate that a draft is completed by 31 March 2006 and

would request that this is forwarded to the Strategic Review Group who is responsible for monitoring implementation of all scrutiny and strategic review recommendations (see paragraph 3.3.)

2. Recommendations

We have made a number of recommendations for regional partners as listed below and would request that individual Concordat Partners formally agree them. These are intended to provide a framework for future action and are generic rather than addressing individual sectors or themes. The context for these is discussed within the body of the report.

- 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.

3. Context for Review

- 3.1 The West Midlands Regional Assembly has a statutory responsibility to scrutinise Advantage West Midlands, the Regional Development Agency. While developing appropriate mechanisms to carry out this role, it was recognised that the West Midlands Regional Assembly is in an ideal position to examine how regional bodies are working collectively to address key issues for the region. Through strategic reviews of specific areas the Assembly aims to present a regional view and to promote open and transparent policies and decision-making. All review activity is governed by the Strategic Review Protocol agreed by the West Midlands Regional Assembly, Advantage West Midlands and Government Office for the West Midlands.
- 3.2 Strategic reviews are carried out under the aegis of the Regional Concordat. This document 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 integration of regional strategies. The signatories of the Regional Concordat are

West Midlands Regional Assembly
Government Office for the West Midlands
West Midlands Local Government Association
Regional Action West Midlands
EMBRACE West Midlands
West Midlands Business Council
Sustainability West Midlands
Advantage West Midlands
West Midlands Learning and Skills Councils
West Midlands Higher Education Association
Culture West Midlands (formally West Midlands Life)

- 3.3 The Strategic Review Group, the Assembly body responsible for the scrutiny and strategic review process, selected the theme of equalities and diversity for review following consultation with regional partners. This reflected forthcoming legislative changes, the region's changing demography and regional concerns in respect of leadership and co-ordination.
- 3.4 The full Assembly approved the broad area selected for review and charged us to examine this on behalf of the region. This review has also been supported financially by both Advantage West Midlands and Government Office for the West Midlands and by the nomination of a Panel Member from both organisations. As a Panel we have independently agreed the review methodology, terms of reference, recommendations and this report. We would ask that the full Assembly and Concordat Partners discuss the issues raised by this review, endorse our recommendations and work together to implement them.

4. **Background**

- 4.1 Initial discussions regarding the selection of equalities and diversity as a review topic were based on the Fairness for All: A New Commission for Equality and Human Rights White Paper published in May 2004. This suggested that the proposed Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) would have a presence in the nine English Regions including London with separate arrangements for Scotland and Wales. Paragraph 8.4 of the White Paper states that "In developing its regional arrangements, the CEHR will be sensitive to regional needs and identify how and in what capacity it is best able to develop partnerships to deliver its functions at regional level. The scale and nature of its regional activity will also need to reflect the resources available."
- 4.2 It seemed that the exploration of regional needs would be a useful and important initiative that would enable a significant contribution to be made to the design and role of the CEHR regional arrangements. However early discussions with key regional partners identified that there were serious concerns regarding how regional bodies were approaching equalities and diversity, both as individual

organisations and in partnership.

- 4.3 The Regional Concordat identifies a number of key regional commitments. Although there is no specific commitment in respect of equalities and diversity this is covered by the commitment towards achieving social inclusion. This states that

“Partners commit to work to achieve equality of access and opportunity in all aspects of life for the region’s inhabitants, regardless of neighbourhood, social or ethnic group, gender, age or disability; to value the diversity of the region’s population and to take full account of diverse groups in the development of policy; to ensure targeted activity to help disadvantaged or underachieving communities and social groups; and to valuing diversity, including ethnicity and faith.¹”

- 4.4 The vehicle for joint working in respect of this commitment is named within the Regional Concordat as the Social Inclusion Partnership established by the West Midlands Regional Assembly in 2002.

- 4.5 The Fairness for All White Paper identifies “protected groups” as

“the following groups of people to the extent that they are – or soon will be – protected by discrimination legislation in respect of less favorable treatment based on particular characteristics or personal circumstances: men and women; people of different racial groups; people who have or have had a disability; people of different sexual orientations; people of different religions or beliefs (including those who do not have a religion or belief); people of different ages; and people who intend to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender reassignment.²”

- 4.6 We felt it would also be useful therefore to understand the region's demography in respect of these strands. Examination of how regional partners were considering the needs of these groups and the impact of their strategies and policies on them would be an essential element of the review process.

- 4.6 At its first meeting the Review Panel also agreed to include the additional strand of Refugee and Asylum Seekers in line with government policy as this is important factor for the West Midlands Region.

- 4.7 The West Midlands Region contains urban, rural and remote rural areas with distinct characteristics. We felt it was important to consider the region as a whole and to explore the differences between urban and rural experiences.

5. **Review Methodology**

- 5.1 The review was carried out using a panel hearing approach supported by

¹ West Midlands Regional Concordat – page 9

² Fairness for All: A New Commission for Equality and Human Rights – page 17

research. All Assembly Members and Alternate Members were invited to be involved in the process. In addition Advantage West Midlands and Government Office for the West Midlands were invited to nominate a Panel Member. A Panel of nine was established however one member left towards the end of the review process due to organisational changes.

- 5.2 A specialist advisor, Dee Upton, was seconded on a part time basis from Business in the Community to support us throughout the process. We would like to formally thank Business in the Community, Advantage West Midlands and Government Office for the West Midlands for providing this resource.
- 5.3 We would also like to thank the members of the Advisory Group that was an attempt to bring together a small number of organisations and individuals actively working with and in the communities identified as protected groups (see 4.5 above). Although it was not in the end possible for this group to contribute to the review as originally envisaged we have taken into consideration the views expressed and the lessons learnt.
- 5.4 The evidence gathering process included twelve panel meetings held between February and December 2005 as well as a number of other meetings attended by officers on behalf of the Panel. Despite the number of hours of evidence presented we still believe that we have only touched on what is currently being achieved within the region and the issues facing us. However we believe that the recommendations we have made will provide the basis for detailed and structured discussions in the future.
- 5.5 We consulted on a draft version of this report in accordance with the Strategic Review Protocol (see paragraph 3.1). We would like to thank respondents for their comments and we have amended this report as a consequence. Some of the comments received dealt with specific themes in detail or were more relevant to the development of the work plan. All responses, together with all evidence received have been passed to the Equality and Diversity Director to assist her with the implementation phase of this review (see paragraph 1.5).

6. **Panel Members**

- 6.1 The Panel comprised of

Rev John Hall	West Midlands Faiths Forum - Chair
Roger McKenzie	TUC - Vice Chair
Cllr David Beechey	Bridgnorth District Council
Cllr Elias Mattu	Wolverhampton City Council
Cllr Martin Heatley	Warwickshire County Council
Chris Eade	Government Office West Midlands
Diane Rayner	Advantage West Midlands Board
Cavelle Lynch	Agender for Women
Gerald Nembhard	EMBRACE (until summer 2005)

7. **Research**

- 7.1 We are aware of the extent of research and reports that have been published in

respect of equality and diversity issues. However we considered that the following areas were important for the review and therefore commissioned four pieces of independent research. These were also designed to inform and contribute to future regional discussions. We do not intend to detail the findings of these pieces of research separately within this report. Their findings have informed our deliberations and here appropriate this report will make references to them. The research reports will be available on the West Midlands Regional Assembly website. (www.wmra.gov.uk).

Demographic Research – West Midlands Regional Observatory

- 7.2 The aim of this research was to provide a picture of the regional population in respect of the Fairness for All protected groups and refugees and asylum seekers (see paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6). It looks at what information is currently available, considers where information or evidence is missing and makes some suggestions for further investigations.
- 7.3 The main source of information consulted was the 2001 census with other sources consulted where data was difficult to compile, particularly in respect of asylum seekers and refugees, sexual orientation and gender reassignment. Data within the report is provided at regional level and Local Authority level with national comparisons.

Articulating Equalities Activities in Area Based Strategy and Delivery Partnerships – CSR Partnership

- 7.4 This research was carried out in conjunction with RAWM. It aimed to identify and map equalities organisations in the voluntary and community sector that were operating at a regional and sub regional level. It also had a second purpose which was to invite these organisations to make initial suggestions as to how the regional presence of the CEHR might look.
- 7.5 The identification of organisations proved time consuming and difficult. Results obtained provide a picture of a patchy regional and sub regional equalities infrastructure reflecting historical policy and investment priorities. Respondents were engaged in a wide array of local area based initiatives despite few being resourced to do so. The real gap in engagement appears above the local level. The recommendations call for a greater understanding of equalities infrastructure, the development of further capacity and liaison between groups to maximise resources and share expertise.

Discussion Paper – The West Midlands Voluntary and Community Sector and Government Proposals for Regional CEHR – CSR Partnership

- 7.6 CSR produced a discussion paper as an outcome of the mapping research. This identifies a series of questions and topics that the sector should consider. Although this need not feed directly into the review we believe that it provides the basis of wider discussions within the region that will inform the development of the regional element of the CEHR.

Equality and Diversity – A Study for the West Midlands Regional Assembly – Centre for Voluntary Action research (CVAR)

7.7 During our first meetings it became apparent that as Panel Members we did not have a collective view of what equality and diversity meant. We quickly realised that this was also true of regional partners and therefore commissioned a study to help the development of a common understanding of what is meant by the terms equality and diversity.

7.8 The report contains an overview of the legislative and policy framework, perspectives of key regional stakeholders and a summary of key issues for the review to take forward. It also makes four recommendations for the West Midlands Regional Assembly that we would urge are addressed during the implementation of the outcomes of the review as a whole.

8. Evidence Presented

8.1 The West Midlands Regional Assembly does not have the power to summon witnesses. We would therefore like to thank the wide variety of organisations and individuals who provided evidence either as a written submission, during formal evidence sessions or at workshops. We wanted to hear from a wide cross section of strategic organisations, policy makers, practitioners from all sectors and representatives of communities of interest. We were provided with much to discuss and consider and were generally impressed by the level of commitment and enthusiasm especially amongst practitioners.

8.2 A summary report will be published by 31 March 2006 that illustrates the issues and recommendations with specific examples from the evidence presented. Detailed reports of the individual evidence sessions will be available on West Midlands Regional Assembly website (www.wmra.gov.uk). Further details regarding this review can be obtained from Dagmar Waller, Strategic Review Officer, telephone 0121 678 1054 or email d.waller@wmra.gov.uk

8.3 The evidence sessions consisted of formal sessions with Concordat partners, workshops with business representatives, equality practitioners and regional decision makers. We were also keen to consider the rural dimension of this agenda and included a case study looking at the experiences of Shropshire. We have taken a large amount of evidence from a variety of partners from different sectors and geographical areas of the region. Appendix 2 details those who participated in the process and we would like to apologise to those who wished to contribute but were unable to do so due to our time and resource constraints.

8.4 We were very impressed with the projects and examples given to us during the evidence gathering process and are aware that these are only a sample of work being undertaken within the region.

8.5 Appendix 3 details the wide variety of supporting information that we have considered. This includes government reports, research commissioned by regional partners and practical examples.

- 8.6 We have also looked at the approaches adopted in other regions and received evidence from the North West who have a draft strategy but no partnership, and the South West who have a partnership but no strategy. We were interested in these contrasting approaches, the reasons behind them, and lessons that we could learn.
- 8.7 The remainder of this report discusses a number of themes in the light of the evidence presented, draws conclusions and makes a number of recommendations for the West Midlands Regional Assembly and other regional partners. It does not discuss the individual needs of the various equality strands (see paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6) but considers how the region should approach the wider agenda.

9. **National and Regional Policy Context**

National Influences

- 9.1 The CVAR study (paragraph 7.7) provides a comprehensive context section giving an overview of legislative and national policy focusing on key developments in the British equalities agenda since the 1957 Treaty of Rome. It is clear that this has evolved over time to arrive in a situation where equality has been placed at the heart of the public policy agenda.
- 9.2 Consequently there is a plethora of terms in regular use within national policies reflecting perhaps the different ways the equalities agenda can be considered in policy development. These include equalities, diversity, social inclusion, social exclusion and community cohesion. These terms have also been translated into regional working for example with the creation of a Social Inclusion Partnership, and added to by Advantage West Midlands' stated focus on economic exclusion.
- 9.3 There has also been a change in emphasis of legislation with the placing of a positive duty on Local Authorities and public bodies to promote equalities (Race Relations Amendment Act 2000). New employment regulations have been introduced in respect of sexual orientation and religion and belief and will be introduced in 2006 on age.
- 9.4 The creation of a single Equality and Human Rights Commission is an acknowledgement that there is a need to move from the current silo approach of looking at individual themes such as race and disability in isolation. The evidence presented to us would support this view, however there are concerns that the specific needs of certain sectors could get hidden by the needs of larger, more powerful or better organised sectors. The equalities and diversity agenda is much more complex than it may first appear and the more simplistic silo approach does not take into account the effect of multiple disadvantage.

Engagement

- 9.5 Evidence presented to us indicates that larger public bodies need to equality proof consultation mechanisms to ensure that these are sufficiently wide to involve appropriate groups. We recognise the difficulties of identifying and consulting with small groups particularly in rural areas where they can be isolated and lack support mechanisms. We were given some examples of this during

- discussions with the Shropshire Equalities Forum, where it was apparent that a Local Authority had made efforts to consult but community groups felt excluded from this process. This provided us with a clear indication of the difficulties Local Authorities and other public bodies have in developing dialogue, which can also be applied to the urban context.
- 9.6 This session also clearly demonstrated the vulnerability and powerlessness of some minority groups. A member of the gypsy and travellers community recounted a potentially dangerous racially motivated incident that was not reported to the police. This has led us to consider the degree to which powerful organisations make an active effort to go out to talk to communities on their own terms rather than merely expect them to attend public meetings. We were impressed by the work done within Craven Arms to engage with the small Asian community and would hold this as an example where an imaginative approach has had a positive impact. We would urge all public bodies, in both urban and rural areas to develop equally imaginative and innovative ways of engaging a variety of communities of interest.

West Midlands Context

- 9.7 The West Midlands Region does not have a regional strategy relating to social inclusion or equality issues. This is in contrast to the North West Region where a draft equalities strategy, Action for Equality, has been consulted on during 2005. The Social Inclusion Partnership came to the conclusion that a separate strategy would contribute to the treatment of social issues in a silo rather than ensuring that these were addressed as cross cutting themes by other regional strategies.
- 9.8 From evidence presented to us it appears that attempts have been made to mainstream social issues, including equalities and diversity, as part of the development of regional strategies. For example the social dimension was recognised in the development of the Regional Spatial Strategy (then Regional Planning Guidance) where one of the advisory reference groups established to support the process examined social inclusion.

Regional Economic Strategy

- 9.9 When the Regional Economic Strategy, Delivering Advantage, was revised in 2004, led by Advantage West Midlands on behalf of the region, social inclusion was removed as a stated cross cutting theme. Advantage West Midlands subsequently prepared a Social Inclusion accompanying statement to demonstrate how these issues have become embedded in their economic inclusion approach. In the light of the evidence heard, we believe that this was a serious error of judgement. The evidence presented to us has made it clear that economic inclusion can only be achieved if a more holistic and imaginative view of regeneration is taken by the region.
- 9.10 Advantage West Midlands will shortly be commencing the process of revising the Regional Economic Strategy on behalf of the Region (due 2007). We would urge them to ensure that this process considers how the Region can best assist all its population to contribute economically and creatively to the best of their ability and to receive an adequate income. We believe Advantage West Midlands have a vital role to play in this area.

- 9.11 The business case promoted by Professional DiverCity identifies that one of the benefits of employing individuals from the different communities is the subsequent attraction of increased business from these communities. However in order to enable increased employment, issues surrounding skills, disenchantment and isolation from mainstream society needs to be addressed. WIRE (Women in Rural Enterprise) are encouraging small businesses by offering an increased range of services and activities to develop the self confidence of women in rural businesses. Equalities can be a key driver in bringing underused and undervalued individuals into the regional economy for example older people with skills currently in demand. The need for this has been highlighted in a recent report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Migration and Social Mobility, which highlighted the impact of family background and ethnicity in achieving occupational success and avoiding unemployment.

Regional Sustainable Development Framework

- 9.12 The Regional Sustainable Development Framework (RSDF), currently being revised, aims to ensure that all elements of sustainable development are addressed when strategies and policies are revised or developed. This states that

“the concept of dealing with social, economic, environmental and natural resource issues harmoniously does make good sense. Policymakers are often criticised for having a ‘silo’ mentality, focusing on their specific area of responsibility without recognising the wider implications of their decisions. The Framework encourages thinking beyond the narrow remit of a single policy area³”.

- 9.13 We feel that policy work in this region has focused on social inclusion or economic inclusion rather than equalities, inequalities or diversity. The main exceptions to this appear to be the Regional Health Partnership’s work to address health inequalities and the RSDF itself. We were very pleased to note that the current version has an explicit commitment to embracing diversity within its nine principles and a number of objectives that relate to this theme. We are conscious that the RSDF will only have an impact on strategy and policy development if it used by partners. We would urge that the current Concordat review process highlights this as a key mechanism by which partners can work collectively to address all aspects of sustainable development.

Sustainable Development

- 9.14 The West Midlands Regional Assembly has recently formally affirmed its commitment to sustainable development and as part of this agreed a monitoring mechanism. Internal monitoring would take place by means of an annual report from each of the Regional Partnerships setting out how their work is contributing to sustainable development in the region to the Assembly’s Annual General Meeting. External monitoring would be provided by the Observatory’s State of the Region Report, which will evaluate how well the region is performing against

³ A Sustainable Future for the West Midlands A Regional Sustainable Development Framework – Version One – page 8

its sustainable development objectives. We would wish to ensure that these reports make specific references to what is being achieved in respect of equalities and diversity.

9.15 We welcomed the commitment to equalities and diversity demonstrated by Sustainability West Midlands in their evidence to us but are concerned that this aspect of sustainable development is not given sufficient consideration. It is the weakest element both within the RSDF and the membership of Sustainability West Midlands. This perhaps reflects the complex and amorphous nature of the social issues when compared with the harder economic or environmental agendas.

9.16 **Recommendations**

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.

10. **Regional Structures**

Social Inclusion Partnership

10.1 The West Midlands does not have an equalities partnership or forum. The Social Inclusion Partnership (paragraph 4.4) was established as a result of research commissioned by the West Midlands Regional Assembly. It was envisaged that this should advise the West Midlands Regional Assembly, champion social inclusion across the region, facilitate joining up and co-ordination of policies and the dissemination of best practice.

10.2 Although these intentions were laudable, we recognise that the Social Inclusion Partnership is no longer fit for purpose due to a number of factors including the extent of the agenda and the absence of a task orientated approach, members not always being in a position to influence their organisations, and lack of dedicated resources both in officer and financial terms. Despite these constraints the Social Inclusion Partnership has had an impact where focussed activity has been possible. Examples of this include input to the revised Regional Economic Strategy and the work of the Advisory Group on Ageing, a sub group of the

- Partnership. The majority of the current regional partnerships are theme based, for example transport, (see figure 1 on page 26). We believe that there is a clear need to ensure that there is one partnership that is purely people focused that can inform work in other areas.
- 10.3 It is essential that lessons are learnt from the failures of the Social Inclusion Partnership structure and its lack of focus. We are very aware of the danger that any replacement structure that we recommend will suffer from the same constraints. It is vital that partners develop the capacity to engage meaningfully and contribute to the development of the equality and diversity agendas in this region.
- Regional Networks**
- 10.4 The West Midlands has a significant number of networks supporting organisations working in the area of equalities. These are organised thematically, geographically and sectorally or combine these elements. The CSR research (paragraph 7.4) only attempted to map those organisations that exist within the voluntary and community sector. Evidence presented to us made it clear that networks existed with variable degrees of activities and support. Some of these are detailed below.
- 10.5 In the public sector there are a number of formalised regional officer groups that meet on a regular or semi regular basis. These aim to share information and experiences and to support and advise their members. They are generally self-supporting with limited assistance from regional organisations. The largest of these is the Social Inclusion Officers Network that is linked to the West Midlands Local Government Association and West Midlands Regional Assembly Structures although not in a formalised way. This has a virtual membership of approximately 120 although significantly fewer attend meetings. There is also the Race Equality Implementation Group that is facilitated by Race Equality West Midlands. This brings together officers from local authorities primarily around race equality although they intend to broaden their remit to the wider equalities agenda. Race Equality West Midlands also supports a similar group for Local Strategic Partnerships.
- 10.6 The private sector has less well developed networks that purely deal with equality issues although there is a significant amount of informal contacts. The West Midlands Business Council has a Diversity group which aims to work with businesses from all sectors of the community to ensure equality of opportunity. Current areas of discussion are procurement and the barriers faced by small businesses, for example those businesses from the BME community, and the talents required to enable them to recruit from a larger pool. Advantage West Midlands supports the Minority Ethnic Business Forum and the Regional Women and Enterprise Group that focus primarily on economic issues.
- 10.7 We were very impressed with the work carried out as part of Regional Strategic Engagement Fund, a three year programme funded primarily by Advantage West Midlands and to a lesser extent by the West Midlands Regional Assembly. This is administered by RAWM and was intended to develop and improve voluntary and community sector engagement in regional discussion strategy and action.

- This has allowed the development of a series of networks including around faiths, disability, age (both older and younger people) and gender. Appendix 4 details the networks supported by this fund.
- 10.8 These groups play a varied and active role at a regional level including nominations to the West Midlands Regional Assembly, although these are constrained by resources. However we are very concerned with the future of these groups given that this programme is due to come to an end in March 2006. We feel that one of the priorities for a regional work plan is to identify what is needed to enable the voluntary and community sector to contribute to regional activities. Support provided to the existing networks has enabled this region to successfully engage elements of the Voluntary and community sector. We believe that the region will benefit considerably if this is built on rather than being lost.
- 10.9 During the review process we have discovered that a number of groups or forums have been developed at a sub regional level. Shropshire Equalities Forum is an example of how the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is starting to bring together representatives of public organisations and communities although there is more work to be done. Warwickshire Equalities Network is a more typical example of an informal officer driven sub regional network primarily for the public sector that allows sharing of experiences and provides informal support. We recognise the differences between sub regions and would not prescribe a particular approach but would urge sharing of experiences and learning from each other.
- 10.10 Overall we were impressed by the level of networking activity within the region and by the desire of organisations to extend this. Examples given to us of embryonic or planned networks included an employer's network being developed by ACAS and Sport England's aim to develop a series of linked community sports networks. We recognise that gaps exist, for example there is no regional network around sexual orientation or dealing with equalities issues in education. We would hope that any new regional agenda would support these networks and explore ways of filling any gaps.
- 10.11 We are very concerned that existing networks exist in isolation with little or no cross fertilisation of ideas or discussion of common issues. Only a very limited number of these have a profile that allows them to inform or influence policies and strategies at a regional level. We would wish to see the sharing of experiences and good practice being rolled out to other areas and sectors.
- 10.12 We were very interested to hear evidence from Equality South West which aims to act as a source of expertise on equalities issues, bringing together members of equalities communities so that their opinions can impact on the work of a range of regional organisations. We feel that a similar structure in this region could bring our varied networks together with key regional organisations to increase awareness, influence strategies and policies. This would also provide a centre of expertise in order to share information between sectors, equality strands and the region as a whole.

10.13 We recognise that an active forum or partnership will only provide part of the solution to the issues within the West Midlands. A body seeking to influence strategies and policies however coherent and articulate will only be successful if regional organisations are prepared to engage in a positive way.

Regional Partner Activities

10.14 Throughout the review process regional partners emphasised their commitment to giving groups the opportunity to be involved in policy formation and decision making. The review process reflects a willingness to address these difficult issues. However the West Midlands Regional Assembly and its partners must demonstrate a practical commitment to take on board the challenges presented by this agenda.

10.15 We are however concerned with the extent to which commitment is followed through with practical actions. Evidence presented to us clearly demonstrates the frustration felt by many practitioners within the public sector that equalities and diversity is not being effectively mainstreamed and that a “tick box” approach has often been adopted. Commitments made at senior levels within organisations are not seen as having an impact lower down. In the worse cases these are seen as platitudes rather than a genuine commitment. It more frequently appears that such commitments are not filtered through organisations due to the lack of resources and impact that more junior practitioners can have on middle managers. We have also discovered that commitments from regional organisations are not generally reflected in their business plans or strategic goals.

10.16 We would like to commend those regional organisations that are beginning to embed equality and diversity issues into their activities. The West Midlands Regional Assembly is starting to make a conscious effort to identify and involve groups in the partial revision of the Regional Spatial Strategy and we will be interested to see the effectiveness of this process.

10.17 Advantage West Midlands have been proactive in identifying a Board Member as an Equalities Champion and Corporate Directors as internal and external facing Equality and Diversity Directors, whose roles are yet to be developed. Evidence presented to us did not demonstrate how seriously these champions are taken within their organisation and the impact they have on service delivery and in removing the silo approach.

10.18 We feel that this is a good concept but further development is required including the agreement of clear remits, understanding of roles, provision of support and the development of reporting and monitoring mechanisms. Two simplistic but effective measures could be how often issues are raised by officers and reported to the Board and the frequency of equality and diversity related issues appearing on Board agendas. We feel that Champions have an important role in leading equalities and diversity within their own organisations.

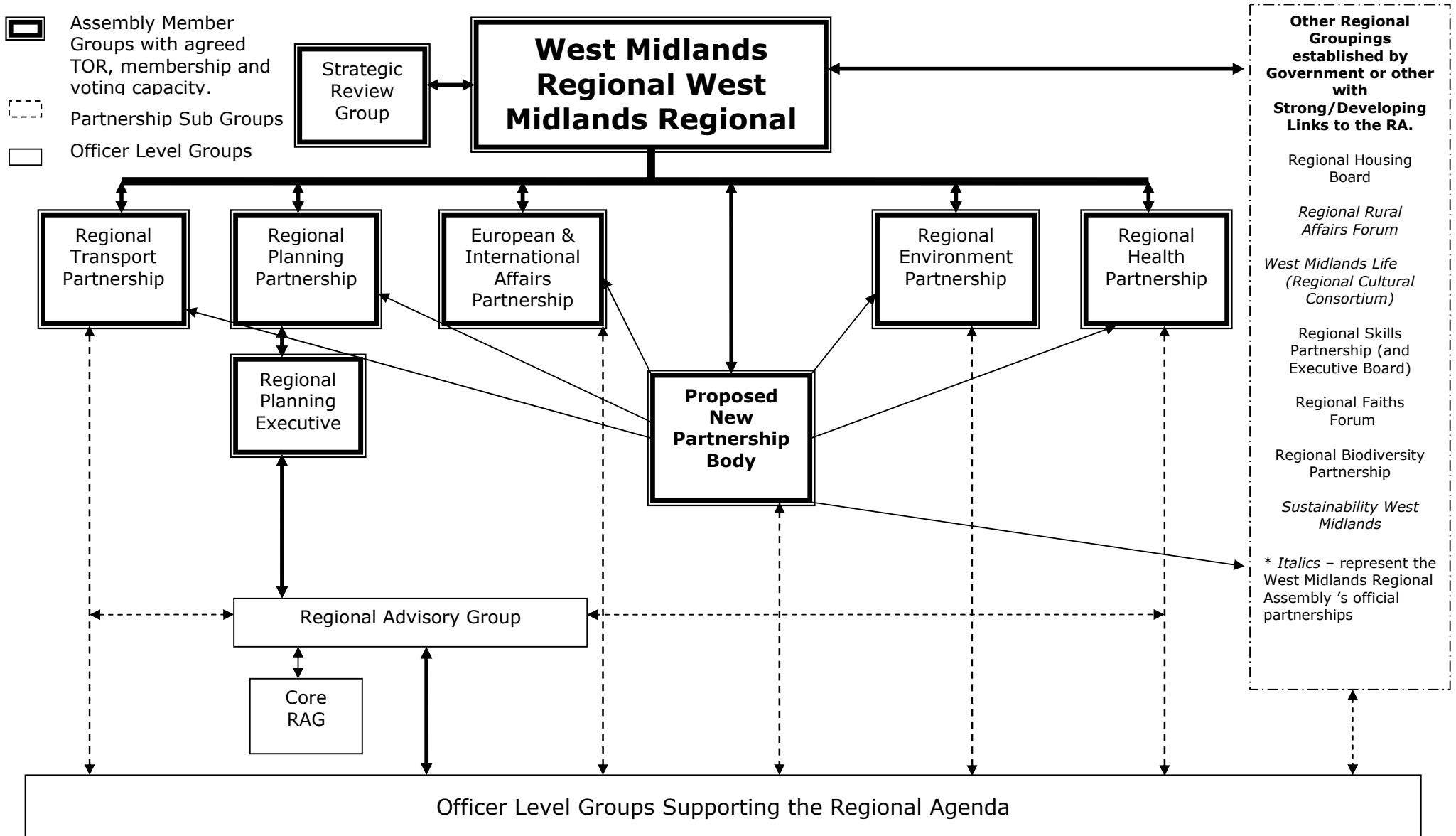
10.19 We would also like to single out Culture West Midlands for the positive way they have responded to the questions raised by the review process with discussions

at Board and Forum level. We welcome the inclusion of a commitment to equalities and diversity within their business objectives and the development of work strands to support it. We were very pleased to hear that the discussions prompted by the review have led to the development of a bid to the Home Office Connecting Communities Plus programme which aims to develop good practice to be adopted nationally. The bid submitted by Culture West Midlands is an action based research project to examine the barriers to accessing culture and how activity can be co-ordinated to improve access and develop more cohesive communities.

New Partnership Body

- 10.20 We feel it is essential that regional structures should be revised to refocus on the need to mainstream equalities and diversity within the region. We therefore propose that a new Regional Partnership body is created to act as a hub bringing together representatives of regional bodies and thematic, sectoral and sub regional networks. This will provide a firm platform from which to address opportunities and identify regional priorities. This new body would replace the existing Social Inclusion Partnership and link to existing regional structures as shown in figure 1 on page 26.
- 10.21 The role of this new task orientated Regional Partnership Body will be to advise and support regional organisations and networks in developing a holistic approach to addressing inequalities in the region. This will include advising the West Midlands Regional Assembly, development of a regional equalities and diversity work plan and sharing of good practice. This body should also influence other regional partnerships by providing information, explaining context and gaining commitment. It is important that close links are developed with other regional partnerships in order to achieve this and to identify where joint approaches could be developed for example with the Regional Health Partnership.
- 10.22 The new Regional Partnership Body will also provide a valuable mechanism to informing and influence central government. In particular we would anticipate that close relationships will be developed with the CEHR regional presence. The Equality and Diversity Director (see paragraph 11.17) will have an important role in ensuring that a proactive rather than response relationship is developed with appropriate central government departments.
- 10.23 We also feel that it is important that the European perspective is considered by the new Regional Partnership Body in terms of influencing regional policy, sharing expertise and good practice and in accessing possible funding. West Midlands in Europe will therefore have a key role to play.
- 10.24 One of the functions of the new Regional Partnership Body will be to provide a mechanism by which regional bodies and leaders can be held to account in respect of their commitments to and delivery of a regional equalities and diversity agenda. This could take the form of a sub group in a select committee type role. It is also possible that this can inform regional discussions regarding the monitoring of the Regional Concordat.

10.25 The new Regional Partnership Body, while working to integrate sectors and themes should also identify where work relating to specific issues that will impact on the region is required at a particular time. This should be carried out by individual time limited groups with clear work plans that report to the new Regional Partnership Body. Such groups should not be restricted to the themes identified in this report but be responsive to need. For example use could be made of the existing Advisory Group on Ageing to lead work related to legislative changes due to come into effect in October 2007 and the opportunities and challenges resulting from an ageing population.



10.26 We would remind partners that the structures we are proposing are only a means to an end. It would be very disappointing if, as with the Social Inclusion Partnership, significant resources were used to develop the structures with little support then being available for activity.

10.27 Appendix 5 details the proposed methods of working for the new Regional Partnership Body including draft terms of reference. These are not intended to be prescriptive but to provide a starting point for discussion.

10.28 **Recommendations**

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.

11. **Regional Opportunities**

11.1 The review process has allowed us to identify a number of opportunities within the region. Our brief examination of activity in other regions demonstrated that these are not unique to the West Midlands. One of the main opportunities for improvement within the region, its structures, has been discussed in section 10. This section of the report explores the remaining key opportunities and makes recommendations.

Common Understanding

11.2 Whilst talking to a variety of organisations and individuals throughout the review we have identified that there is considerable confusion around the terms equalities and diversity and how these relate to social inclusion, community cohesion etc. At times we also felt that organisations were hiding behind these terms leading to a lack of action through a shield of misunderstanding. There was also clear evidence that, despite a high level commitment, equalities and diversity were seen as a standalone or side issues and not considered to be mainstream activity. This led us to commission the CVAR research (paragraph 7.7) as an attempt to start an open discussion about terminology and to develop a common understanding.

11.3 Whilst this report could not be expected to provide a simple definition for the region given the complexity of the area, it made a clear recommendation that the concepts of equalities and diversity needed to be separated

“Although they are connected they mean different things and require different measures and approaches. Diversity is a *component* of the equalities agenda; it is the representation, in one social system, of people with distinctly different group affiliations of cultural significance.

Promoting diversity by itself will not lead to equality⁴.

- 11.4 It goes on to conclude that the main objective of the wider equalities agenda is to overcome the inequalities that exist in our society, that have generally arisen because diverse groups have not been treated equally, and to eradicate institutional discrimination. Additional benefits deriving from this include economic, such as access to diverse markets leading to enhanced economic performance, social such as increased levels of social inclusion and community cohesion, and political benefits such as enhanced levels of participation in the democratic process.
- 11.5 We feel that it is vital that organisations within the region identify what they understand by the terms used in this area and how their activities contribute towards addressing inequalities as well as promoting diversity. There needs to be a clear common understanding of the concepts and terms in regular use including positive discrimination, positive action, education and campaigning. We recognise that regional organisations have different focuses for activity but would urge them to consider the extent to which the derived benefits identified above (see paragraph 11.4) will contribute to their organisational goals.

Willingness to Discuss Issues

- 11.6 We have identified an apparent reluctance to discuss difficult issues. This may stem from a lack of understanding (paragraph 11.2) but also from a fear of saying the wrong thing or sending the wrong signals. We believe that this attitude is partly due to the legacy of political correctness. The review process itself has been affected by this. We wished to ascertain the make up of the West Midlands Regional Assembly Membership in terms of the protected groups identified in Fairness for All. Following considerable disquiet at senior levels regarding questions in respect of sexual orientation and gender reassignment a planned questionnaire was withdrawn.
- 11.7 It is important that the new partnership body creates a new branding including name, image and logo that “loses the baggage” of the past and is not tokenistic. There is a need for this to be different in order that a new start can be made to assist the region to move forward. It is vital that plain English is used and that jargon is avoided.
- 11.8 A draft revised Guidance on the General Principles of Designation of Voluntary Regional Assemblies was received in November 2005 from David Miliband, Minister of Communities and Local Government, ODPM. This states that

“The West Midlands Regional Assembly should achieve an appropriate gender, ethnic and disability balance among its members. Arrangements should be made to keep this under review. Ministers will expect to see steady progress towards a position in which men and women are equally represented on regional assemblies and the proportion of disabled members and members from the ethnic minorities that reflect that in the

⁴ Equality and Diversity A Study for the West Midlands Regional Assembly – page 16

adult population⁵.

The West Midlands Regional Assembly will therefore soon be required to actively explore the extent to which it reflects the region's demographic make up. We would urge the West Midlands Regional Assembly to go further than this and also look at groups to be covered by future legislation including age and faith.

- 11.9 Concerns have also been expressed from the voluntary and community sector that the issues and needs of particular groups will be lost due to the power of other more established groups (see paragraph 9.4). This will require organisations and individuals to develop trust in each other and in regional processes. A starting point to address this is the provision of an opportunity for discussion in a safe environment where issues can be recognised.
- 11.10 A further linked issue is the lack of leadership within the region. This was identified as a concern during the scoping of the review and this was borne out by evidence presented to us. There is a clear need for leadership within organisations, between organisations and decision makers. We would hope that the recommendation for Concordat Partners to identify a Regional Champion (paragraph 10.28) would assist with the development of leadership within those organisations.
- 11.11 When discussing regional leadership, partners have clearly indicated that they feel that the West Midlands Regional Assembly is best placed to take this forward. We agree that the Assembly's role in ensuring coherence between regional strategies provides an ideal opportunity to ensure equality issues are addressed in a serious and co-ordinated manner. We believe that the Assembly should act as the lead organisation within the region working through its policy partnerships. This role should focus on influencing, challenging and holding partners to account through the Concordat process. We would again emphasise the link with sustainable development and remind partners of the need to work to achieve social, economic and environmental goals in a holistic and joined up manner.
- 11.12 We are concerned that by identifying the West Midlands Regional Assembly as the lead organisation, other partners may feel they are not required to play any role in this area. We would therefore urge that the current Concordat revision process makes a clear commitment for all partners to contribute to leading the equalities and diversity agenda within the region.
- 11.13 An issue that was repeatedly brought to our attention was the need for resources. This plea came from a wide variety of individuals including representatives from voluntary and community sector networks, local authorities and regional organisations. Generally however individuals recognised resource constraints within the region and their own organisations but were convinced that better use could be made of existing resources. We agree and would emphasise the need to work smarter with a much greater degree of co-ordination and co-operation between organisations both and regionally and sub regionally. We

⁵ Draft Revised Guidance - ODPM

would envisage that the regional work plan developed by the new partnership body will help prioritise areas for joint action.

- 11.14 We recognise that there are issues associated with the management of funding provided by two key organisations, Government Office for the West Midlands and Advantage West Midlands, due to changing national “goalposts”. These have a direct impact on the delivery of equality and diversity initiatives especially as the type of activities undertaken are driven by funding available. There is a need to end uncertainty and provide clarity regarding the purpose of funding and outputs required in order to develop a proper planning process that is responsive to need.
- 11.15 We feel that a more formal mechanism needs to be created to ensure that funding available within and to the region is used to its full potential. We would therefore wish to see development of regular officer level meetings, chaired by the Equality and Diversity Director and attended by representatives of the principal funding agencies within the region. This could be developed from a process currently being led by the Big Lottery which is examining how a greater coherence could be achieved between organisations providing wider funding streams within the region. A key role of the new regional Partnership body will be to establish that equity is achieved within the funding process and would wish this to be considered as part of the regional work plan.
- 11.16 We were told repeatedly that resources should be used to a better effect rather than the production of costly research projects that merely tell us what we already know. An example of this is Rights and Responsibilities – Options for BME Engagement commissioned by Advantage West Midlands. In our opinion this report took a seemingly excessive amount of time to complete, reiterated issues that are already common knowledge and made few substantive or original recommendations. We believe there is generally a common agreement about what needs to be done within the region but a lack of understanding of how this can be achieved. The region needs to be more visionary, learn from each other and explore innovative solutions rather than hide behind further repetitive research. The proposed partnership body would also have a key role in sharing existing work and advising on proposals for future research.
- 11.17 We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Home Office for recently agreeing to fund a secondment of a Deputy Director for a three year period to act as the Equality and Diversity Director in the development and implementation of a regional work plan. We would emphasise that this post will require support and resources from other regional partners. The work of the proposed new Partnership Body will also need both policy and administrative support. It is essential that partners contribute to this support as without it the agenda will not be progressed.
- 11.18 While recognising current workloads, we would urge regional organisations to contribute to a secretariat to support this agenda. One option could be an agreement to dedicate a proportion of time of their officers currently working in this area to support regional working. This would then form a “virtual secretariat” in a similar way to that developed to support the West Midlands Regional Assembly’s European and International Affairs Partnership. This would be

managed by the Equality and Diversity Director who will be based in the West Midlands Regional Assembly. This virtual secretariat could supplement existing and future financial resources made available by partners.

11.19 **Recommendations**

- 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

12. **Regional Priorities**

- 12.1 The review terms of reference include identifying recommendations for regional activities for a three year period from 2005 to 2008. We have therefore tried to identify main areas of joint activity in the short to medium term while not wishing to prescribe activity or prevent additional work been carried out in response to changing circumstances.
- 12.2 The recommendations in this section should be implemented in parallel to the development of the structural changes detailed in section 10. They are intended to complement the recommendations regarding regional opportunities detailed in section 11. We feel that it is important that the region achieve some “quick wins” which will contribute to the development of trust and provide positive experiences of joint working.
- 12.3 While we do not feel that a separate equalities strategy would be appropriate for this region (paragraph 9.7), we agree that there should be a clear regional aim articulated in the next version of the Regional Concordat. From evidence presented to us we believe that this should state that our common aim is that the region should value its citizens by giving everyone a chance to fulfil themselves

- by creating opportunities and contributing to a wider renaissance of the region. It is essential that a clear statement that values all our citizens is reflected in all aspects of organisation's activities within the region and that tokenism is avoided at all cost.
- 12.4 The review process has generated considerable discussion within the region and we wish to maintain the momentum that it has generated. We feel that it is essential that equalities and diversity remain high on the regional agenda. We believe that one way of achieving this is to strengthen the relationship between equalities and sustainable development (paragraph 9.13).
- 12.5 The West Midlands Regional Assembly has recently agreed that sustainable development should be formally adopted as the central principle of West Midlands Regional Assembly working. In addition to strengthening linkages with sustainable development we would wish the West Midlands Regional Assembly to make a similar explicit commitment to adopting equalities and diversity as two distinct but linked principles of West Midlands Regional Assembly working.
- 12.6 In order to allow regional organisations to move forward there needs to be a clear understanding of what inequalities exist within the region and where they occur. Many organisations use baseline data that is collected to meet their specific needs. We are unable to see any ongoing mechanism by which data or its analysis is shared or made more widely available within the region.
- 12.7 The West Midlands Regional Observatory would appear to have a key role in this area and have indeed led the recent Regional Lifestyle Survey; however consideration should be given to their resource constraints. We are pleased that The Observatory's Social Demography and Health Regional Data and Intelligence Network (RDIN) Group have taken forward work initiated by the Social Inclusion Officers to develop a series of social inclusion indicators. We feel that it is essential that work like this is shared widely throughout the region in order to inform and support strategy and policy development. Related to this is the need to develop a wider understanding of issues and how empirical data can be used to impact on strategy and policy development.
- 12.8 We are also concerned that outputs rather than outcomes or impacts are measured to identify the impact of initiatives. We recognise that this emphasis is due to the short term nature of targets often dictated by national government or funding streams. It is essential that the region makes an effort to examine the longer term impacts of activities considering unintended consequences and the interrelationship between initiatives led by different organisations.
- 12.9 The lack of readily available data led us to commission the demography research from the West Midlands Regional Observatory (paragraph 7.2). This report not only provides a snapshot of the region but identifies potential areas for future analysis. We would urge regional organisations to consider the appropriateness of these to their future work plans.
- 12.10 We have identified a clear need for co-ordination of activities currently led by a variety of regional organisations. We are unable to ascertain any mechanism

- that allows partners to discuss future activity at a business planning level or during project development. To an extent we would expect this to be resolved by the proposed structural changes (section 10) and the identification of an Equality and Diversity Director (paragraph 11.17). Providing opportunities for discussion will lead to informal links and sharing of information that should generate joint activity.
- 12.11 We would also wish to see the development of an on line central resource that will allow regional organisations to share research and good practice within the region, the UK and Europe and beyond. This will then act as a one stop shop for individuals and organisations within the region signposting information and providing copies of research reports and other information. This could possibly take the form of a blogsite to allow on line discussion of topical issues. An example of an effective use of this approach is the West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum online consultation in respect of the Rural Delivery Framework. We would envisage that it is developed as part of a partners existing website to reduce maintenance costs. Support for this could possibly form part of a contribution to the proposed virtual secretariat (see paragraph 11.18).
- 12.12 Many of the recommendations in this report are related to how regional organisations can or should work together to provide a coherent approach. However we also believe that Concordat Partners could do more to consider equality and diversity issues within their own working arrangements led by an identified internal Champion (paragraph 10.28). We would recommend that partners carry out a formal audit of how they consider equality and diversity both internally and within their delivery arrangements. In particular we have identified the need for larger public bodies to equality proof consultations to ensure that these are sufficiently wide to involve appropriate groups. Such an audit process will require support to be provided initially by the Equality and Diversity Director perhaps utilising lessons from the West Midlands Local Government Association's Peer Review process and rural proofing now carried out by Government Office for the West Midlands. We would hope that work plans resulting from this activity could be shared with other Concordat Partners. The new Regional Partnership Body could use these results to identify where individual organisations are developing good practice that could be shared more widely.
- 12.13 The disturbances in Lozells, Birmingham around 25 October 2005 have raised concerns about how we address community cohesion within this region. Notwithstanding of the cause of these events, they have highlighted the dangers of disenfranchised communities experiencing economic and social deprivation. We would support views that a regional commission should be established by the new Regional Partnership Body to examine how regional partners can contribute to the understanding of and achievement of community cohesion goals.
- 12.14 A way of keeping equalities and diversity on the regional agenda is to provide awards that recognise good practice in all sectors within the region. We would not necessarily wish to develop a new awards mechanism but would urge the new Regional Partnership Body to work with organisations currently providing regional awards in both urban and rural contexts to extend these as appropriate.

12.15 Appendix 5 identifies additional proposed areas of activity for the new Regional Partnership Body including; developing a regional response to the CEHR, sharing best practice and learning from successful sectors starting with culture and sport, examining regional practices in relation to skills particularly in relation to activities within the Higher Education sector and the development of links with Local Education authorities to influence the citizenship curriculum.

12.18 **Recommendations**

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 mechanisms 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.

13. **Conclusion**

13.1 We have found the review process to be challenging and thought provoking. It was not the intention of the review to provide a panacea for the regions' problems in relation to equality and diversity issues. In many ways we feel that we have merely scratched the surface.

13.2 Our intention has been to support individuals and organisations in developing a regional agenda for both equalities and diversity. We were impressed by the amount of activity within the region and our recommendations are intended to bring individuals, organisations, information and activities together to prove a more coherent and joined up approach.

13.3 We believe that it is vital that all regional organisations work together in order to anticipate and plan for future challenges and risks. This need has been highlighted by recent events including the disturbances in Lozells, Birmingham around 25 October 2005 and the resulting discussions to identify the way forward regarding community cohesion issues. We were interested to hear that several regional BME networks have evolved substantially from their original structures and purpose and developed new models of strategic engagement. We would be

- interested to capture some of this learning and development and understand the opportunities, problems and barriers experienced by these networks and would urge the Home Office to collate and disseminate the lessons learned.
- 13.4 A key issue appears to be the capacity of BME groups and networks to deliver programmes. We believe that the new Regional Partnership Body needs to pay particular attention to changes in government policy and structures in this area and make appropriate linkages as new bodies become active for example Capacity Builders.
- 13.5 The recommendations we have made will not resolve these dilemmas but will provide a firm base on which to build. A key issue arising from this review is the lack of space for informed and open discussion and we hope that the structural changes we propose will allow this discussion to take place.
- 13.6 One of the aims of the review was to identify the preferred form of the CEHR regional presence. The Equality Bill, including the formation of a single commission, was published in July 2005 and has been making its way through the parliamentary process. No reference is made to a regional presence within the bill but we have been assured that this is because it does not address “operational” issues. Consultation regarding the regional presence is expected to start in Spring 2006 with a view to providing a number of options for discussion by the Commissioners in September 2006.
- 13.7 We have not made any recommendations in this report regarding the preferred form of the CEHR for this region. This is due to the number of issues raised within the review process and the timing of the national consultation. We feel that we have begun a process of regional debate that can be built on to provide a focused discussion of how this region can best connect with the national equality structures. We believe that the issues raised in this report are pertinent to the discussions regarding the form of the CEHR regional presence. In addition the CSR discussion paper (see paragraph 7.6) will provide a useful starting point for this discussion.
- 13.8 We believe that our recommendations, if implemented, will lead to mainstreaming of equalities and diversity within existing regional strategies and policies. We feel that we have taken the most appropriate approaches from other regions to create a unique West Midlands approach.
- 13.8 We cannot stress enough the importance of taking a serious and honest view of our activities as individuals, organisations and as a region. We hope that regional partners agree to implement the recommendations made in this report and work to ensure that both equality and diversity become an integral part of regional working.

References

Strategic Review Protocol – approved by West Midlands Regional Assembly 15 July 2005

Fairness for All: A New Commission for Equality and Human Rights White Paper - May 2004

West Midlands Regional Concordat – launched July 2003

Action for Equality – Celebrating diversity and creating opportunity for all in the North West of England - A consultation paper January 2005

Regional Planning Guidance for the West Midlands (Regional Spatial Strategy) published June 2004

Delivering Advantage the West Midlands Economic Strategy and Work plan 2004-2010

Migration and social mobility: the life chances of Britain's minority ethnic community – Lucinda Platt published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in November 2005

A Sustainable Future for the West Midlands A Regional Sustainable Development Framework Version 1 – January 2005

Real Lives Real Issues – A State of the Region Report 2004 and Update Report 2005

Draft revised Guidance on the General Principles of Designation of Voluntary Regional Assemblies - ODPM November 2005

Rights and Responsibilities – Options for BME Engagement - Advantage West Midlands March 2005

Equalities Bill (as amended in committee) 13 July 2005

Appendix 1

West Midlands Regional Assembly Strategic Review of Equality and Diversity Terms of Reference

Aim

The aim of this review is to examine the regional approach to equalities and diversity and identify how regional partners should work together to address common priorities.

Method

The review will be carried out by a Review Panel made up of West Midlands Regional Assembly Members with additional co-opted members from key regional bodies. It will be supported by an independent advisor and a Regional Advisory Group made up of representatives of voluntary and community sector organisations or networks working with individual aspects of equalities and diversity. Evidence will be submitted to the review either in writing or by the review activities. These will include a briefing session, discussion events and hearings.

Objectives

The objectives of the review are to identify

- 1 The extent to which regional bodies are currently addressing Equality and Diversity
- 2 Current regional structures and their effectiveness
- 3 Regional level needs of representatives of six strands identified in Fairness for All
- 4 A collective view of the regions response to the changing demography
- 5 Recommendations for regional activities for a three year period from 2005 to 2008
- 6 The preferred form for the CEHR regional presence

Panel Members will develop issues to be considered during the review process. Additional areas may be identified as a result of preparatory work and input from partners and stakeholders.

Cross Cutting Themes

All reviews are required to consider how the cross cutting themes of Sustainable Development and Equalities and Diversity will be addressed within the review process.

An important issue for this review to address is the perceived inequalities that exist between rural and urban areas of the region.

Outputs

A final report will be produced by the Panel and circulated widely.

Review Panel

The Strategic Review Group, the West Midlands Regional Assembly's scrutiny co-ordinating body, has delegated responsibility for this review to the Review Panel. The Panel are required to report progress to the Strategic Review Group through officers and

via the Strategic Review Group Member on the Review Panel. The final report is made on behalf of the West Midlands Regional Assembly and will not require further approval but will be reported to the full West Midlands Regional Assembly. In addition any recommendations made for the West Midlands Regional Assembly itself will need to be accepted by the full West Midlands Regional Assembly.

The Panel Chair will be selected by Panel Members and will be required to act as spokesperson for Panel, with West Midlands Regional Assembly support, as required.

Panel meetings will be considered quorate if three West Midlands Regional Assembly Panel Members are present. All Panel Members should abide by the West Midlands Regional Assembly Code of Conduct (see attached) and are required to declare any possible conflict of interests.

Timescales

The review will commence on 21 February 2005. It is expected that the final report will be completed by 31 August 2005.

Appendix 2

Review Participants

Advisory Group

Cllr Steve Bedser	Birmingham City Council (Chair)
Carol Harte	Agender4Women
Gerald Nembhard	EMBRACE
Joy Warmington	BRAP
Phil Brough	Disability West Midlands
Yann Lovelock	West Midlands Faiths Forum
Dr Satish Brahmhatt	West Midlands Faiths Forum
Magda Prail	Age Concern Herefordshire and Worcestershire
Val Jarrett	West Midlands OPAG
Farhana Sheikh	WMCARS
Claire Daley	Refugee Strategy Network
Karen Creavin	Birmingham Lesbian and Gay Pride

Other Participants

Members of Social Inclusion Partnership

Members of Shropshire Equalities Forum

Members of Race Equality Officers Implementation Group

Hannah	Adjeporig	Victim Support
Abida	Akram	Walsall District Council
Bernadette	Allen	Warwick District Council
Nazneen	Amin	Government Office West Midlands
Kate	Arthurs	Enterprise Rent-A-Car
Vicki	Austin	North West Development Agency
Celia	Bahrami	Shropshire Partnership
Fran	Austins	West Midlands Regional Assembly
Stefanie	Bell	Performance and Scrutiny
Dave	Battersby	Prime Focus
David	Bell	Shropshire Partnership
Sehdev	Bismal	Jennie Lee Professional centre
Sue	Blundred	Independent Consultant
Peter	Boileau	West Midlands Strategic Health Authority
Chris	Bonnard	Regional Action West Midlands
Helen	Brown	WMHEA
Jeremy	Bruce	Sustainability West Midlands
Tim	Bryan	West Midlands Life
Richard	Bubb	Groundwork Back Country
Ben	Cairns	CVAR
Delva	Cambell	Wolverhampton City Council
Lorna	Carson	Coventry City Council
J	Corbishley	Wolverhampton Community Empowerment
Richard	Corfield	Government Office West Midlands
Sophie	Cunningham	Oxfam
Clare	Daley	Refugee Council

Sarah	Davis	Chartered Institute of Housing
Parveen	Deen	NHS Trust
Bina	Desai	West Bromwich Building Society
Bhanu	Dhir	Wilson Given
Shine	Duggal	Arts Council England West Midlands
Robert	Dyson	Warwick Business School
Sandra	Durkin	Coventry and Warwickshire LSC
Trudi	Elliott	West Midlands Regional Assembly
Cllr Matthew	Ellis	Lichfield DC
Katie`	Evans	Refugee Council
Mandy	Evans	Asylum Seeker Support
Karen	Fellows	West Midlands Public Health Group
Nicola	Fisher	Shrewsbury and Atcham borough council
Fiona	Fortune	Sport England
Judith	Fox	Dudley College
Alan	Franks	Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
Susan	Gibney	Warwickshire County Council
Lou	Gladden	Unison
Barbara	Glassey-Partridge	Wolverhampton Asylum Seeker And Refugee Forum
Clare	Gough	Staffordshire County Council
Libby	Green	Screen West Midlands
Jonathan	Gurling	Age Concern England
Kabena	Guyline Ntole	West Midlands African Women Community
Susan	Hanley	National Probation Service West Midlands
Alison	Harrington	Centro
Sue	Hatton	Government Office for the West Midlands
Phil	Haynes	Bournville College
Chris	Hemming	Director Path West Midlands
Gerry	Hendry	HM Probation Service
Juliet	Herbert	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Rob	Hetherington	Advantage West Midlands
Steve	Hind	WMLGA
Jonathon	Hyams	Shropshire Rural Community Council
Karamt	Iqbal	Independent Consultant
Beverley	Jameson	Oswestry Borough Council
Richard	Johnson	Professional DiverCity
Cllr Jo	Jones	Shrewsbury and Atcham
Peter	Jones	Housing Corporation
Arun	Kang	Warwickshire County Council
Emma	Kiteley	West Midlands Regional Assembly
James	Kurian	Visible Minorities Development Council
John	Lancaster	British Waterways
Lorraine	Lander	Executive Education
Noel	Lambert	ACAS
Mick	Laverty	Advantage West Midlands
Alison	Lawson	Advantage West Midlands
Kathy	Lee	Independent Consultant
Sarah	Lewis	Coventry University
Roden	Lorraine	Home Office

John	Mallam	Shropshire County Council
Jaspal	Mann	Coventry City Council
Susan	Massey	Independent Consultant
Andrew	May	Equalities South West
Peter	Millington	Disability West Midlands
Sabeen	Mohamad	Victim Support Shropshire
Fraser	Murry	Coventry Asylum and Refugee Strategic Co-Ordinator
Zahid	Nawaz	CRE
Kabena	Ntole	West Midlands African Women's Community
Bob	Niven	Disability Rights Commission
Maggie	O'Rourke	West Midlands Strategic Health Authority
Bridget	O'Rourke	Equal Opportunities Commission
Kwabena	Osayande	Advantage West Midlands
Mike	Owen	Shropshire County Council
Sharon	Palmer	Regional Action West Midlands
Belinder	Panesar	Milton Keynes Racial Equality Council
Rico	Paris	Gender Advisory bureau
Penny	Parrott	Independent Consultant
Kate	Parsons	Aston University
Inayat	Pashtoonmal	Society of Afghan residents in the Midlands
Rod	Pegler	HMRC
Lucy	Phillips	Birmingham City Council
Kal	Parkesh	Shropshire County Council
Sue	Priest	Community Empowerment Workshop
Aftab	Rahman	Government Office
Sarah	Rahmat	Safer Walsall Partnership
Aaron	Reid	Professional DiverCity
Kath	Rees	The Haven Wolverhampton
Dr Frank	Reeves	Race Equality West Midlands
David	Roberts	Community Safety Partnership
Vincent	Rogers	Stoke-on-Trent City council
Krysia	Rozanska	Screen West Midlands
Razia	Sattar	Sandwell Community Empowerment Network
Mohan	Sandhar	Birmingham City Council
Karen	Saunders	Government Office
Fiona	Scott	ACAS
Felicia	Siebritz	Visible Minorities Development Council
Tarra	Simmons	West Midlands Co Operative Society
Paramjit	Singh	University of Wolverhampton
Gurdev	Singh Bal	Walsall MBC
David	Sivera	Dudley MBC
Anthea	Smith	Coventry City Council
Matt	Smith	South Shropshire District Council
Tony	Snell	Clinical Group
Cheryl	Southam	Commission for Social Care Inspection
Anna	Sterckx	UKYP
Alison	Straker	NCVYS
Lesley	Talbot	Sexual Health Services
Yulia	Tarbath	Herefordshire Council

Sheena	Terrance	WMPAS
George	Thomas	H M Prison Service
Jim	Vughan	Angel Group
Rita	Wadey	Department of Trade and Industry
Michael	Weaver	Independent Consultant
Patricia	Weale	Worcestershire County Council
Myra	White	Disability Rights Commission
Mark	Whitehouse	Clarke Associates Ltd
Bob	Williams-Findlay	Wolverhampton City Council
Gillian	Winstanley	Pertemps Mouzer
Dorothy	Wilson	Board Member Culture West Midlands
Beverley	Wood	Independent Consultant
Becky	Woodcock	Coventry Refugee Centre

Appendix 3

Supporting Evidence

The list below details supporting evidence that was considered by the Panel. These were either background papers or documents were submitted to the panel by partners as supporting evidence.

1. National

Fairness for All: A New Commission for Equality and Human Rights White Paper
Government Response to Fairness for All
Publications from Chartered Institute of Housing
Men, Masculinities and Poverty in the UK – Oxfam
Disability Discrimination Act – background information
Policies towards poverty, inequality and exclusion since 1997 - summary
Delivering Quality Services – EOC
Equality and Diversity in Local Government – ODPM
Breaking the Cycle – Social Exclusion Unit
Building Community Cohesion into Area Bases Initiatives
Gypsy and Travellers – a survey for the CRE
2004-7 – Action on Mental Health
Achieving the Vision – Female Entrepreneurship
British Diversity Awards

2. Regional

Action for Equality – NWRA (Summary and Full Report)
Supporting Evidence for NWRA
 Measuring the Economic Contribution of Equalities Communities in the
 NW
 BME Regional study
 Best Practice in the NW
Equality and Diversity in North East Local Authorities
Extracts from Equality South West Website
GLA Majors Equalities Commission
The effects of immigration on the regions – Migration Watch UK
Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2004

3. West Midlands Region

West Midlands Regional Concordat
Minutes of Local Authority Regional Race Equality Implementation Group
West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy – Issues Paper
Ethnic Minority Regional Economic Data
Growing Up in the West Midlands Spring 2005
African Caribbean Business Support – Birmingham Post
Information re Peer Challenge and member Development Role
Women in Business Supplement – Birmingham Post
Path West Midlands
West Midlands Regional Board – Members
West Midlands RSS/RHS Shared Evidence based – Black and Minority Ethnic
Communities Synthesis
West Midlands Regional Assembly – Proposal for a Regional Social Inclusion

Policy Forum
West Midlands Region – Supporting People Strategy
Rights and Responsibilities – MEL
West Midlands Forum for Supporting Women’s Enterprise
Transawareness Training – GAB
Shropshire Partnership
Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Statement – RES
Advantage West Midlands Equality and Diversity Statement

Written Evidence Submitted

Disability Rights Commission
Chartered Institute of Housing
Race Equality west Midlands – written submission
Race Equality West Midlands – Presentation to Panel
BRAP
Birmingham Professional DiverCity
Culture West Midlands
Concordat partner questionnaires
Advantage West Midlands
West Midlands Regional Assembly
West Midlands Faiths Forum
WMLGA

Appendix 4

Networks Supported by the RSEF

Housing - West Midlands Voluntary and Community Sector
Housing Network

Disability - Regional Disability Network

Young People - Growing Up in the West Midlands
- also supported UKYP (West Midlands)

Rural - Rural Community Councils Network

Gender – Agender4Women

Learning - Voluntary and Community Sector Learning Network for the West
Midlands

Faiths - West Midlands Faiths Forum

Older People - Valuing Age and Experience

Health - West Midlands Health Network

Refugees and Asylum Seekers - Refugee Strategy Network

Appendix 5

Proposed Regional Partnership Body Draft Methods of Working and Terms of Reference

The Partnership will hold a policy lead responsibility for addressing regional inequalities, and supporting and advising the Regional West Midlands Regional Assembly in its leadership role in this area.

Within this the Partnership will:

- 1 Bring together regional strategy makers and representatives of networks from different sectors, themes and geographical areas
- 2 Act as a regional equalities hub to enable the exchange of information and learning
- 3 Provide a meeting place where issues and concerns can be raised by all parties in an open and transparent way
- 4 Contribute to the development and revision of regional strategies and policies to ensure that equality and diversity issues are embedded at an early stage
- 5 Work to support and influence regional partners in addressing social issues
- 6 Work with Sustainability West Midlands to encourage the effective use of the Regional Sustainable Development Framework
- 7 Share information and good practice
- 8 Assess the impact of equalities activities within the region
- 9 Hold regional organisations and leaders to account for their contribution to achieving the regional equalities and diversity agendas
- 10 Provide a mechanism to influence national development of policy
- 11 Work with the Equality and Diversity Director to develop and lead the implementation of a regional work plan for the three years commencing April 2006 with measurable outcomes and milestones
- 12 Work with appropriate officer groups to ensure a coherent regional approach
- 13 Contribute to the West Midlands Regional Assembly 's scrutiny and strategic review process

The Partnership will

- 1 Be chaired by a full West Midlands Regional Assembly Member
- 2 Meet quarterly with additional meetings as required
- 3 Report activity and progress to the West Midlands Regional Assembly on a quarterly basis
- 4 Hold meetings in open session with minutes placed on the West Midlands Regional Assembly website
- 5 Be supported by a secretariat provided by the West Midlands Regional Assembly and other regional partners
- 6 Be task orientated identifying clear goals and milestones

Membership

Membership will be specific to the named individual with a nominated alternative.

Members should

- 1 Be bound by the West Midlands Regional Assembly Code of Conduct in relation

- to their work with the partnership
- 2 Be expected to represent their sector or area of interest and express the views of their organisation or sector
 - 3 Be expected to communicate information and decisions made by the partnership to others in the sector, organisation or group
 - 4 Be nominated by their organisation, sector or network following invitation from the Partnership (or the West Midlands Regional Assembly during implementation)
 - 5 Should be senior representatives from organisations or constituent groups who have a clear understanding of their sector and have the capacity to think strategically

Proposed Areas of Activity

The review has made recommendations for short to medium term activities within the Region. In addition we would like to suggest priority areas of activity for the new Regional Partnership Body to address. These include

- 1 Developing the response to formal consultation regarding the regional presence of the CEHR
- 2 Sharing best practice and learning from the experiences from the culture and sport sectors
- 3 Examine regional practices in relation to skills particularly the contribution of the higher education sector
- 4 Develop links with Local Education Authorities in order to start influencing the citizenship curriculum

Appendix 6

Glossary of Terms

AWM	- Advantage West Midlands
BME	- Black and Minority Ethnic
CEHR	- Commission for Equality and Human Rights
CVAR	- Centre for Voluntary Action Research, Aston Business School
GOWM	- Government Office West Midlands
LSP	- Local Strategic Partnership
ODPM	- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
RAWM	- Regional Action West Midlands
RSDF	- Regional Sustainable Development Framework

SWM - Sustainability West Midlands
WMLGA - West Midlands Local Government Association
WMRA - West Midlands Regional Assembly