

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
22 April 2009

Report of the Chief Executive and Company Secretary

1. Purpose

To provide the Assembly with an update on general issues:

- [3] 2008-09 Year End Progress Report
- [4] 2009-10 Business Plan & Budget
- [5] Retrofitting for the Future – Low Carbon Housing
- [6] The Strategic Forum for Central Wales and the West Midlands
- [7] Equality & Diversity Team

2. Recommendation(s)

The Assembly is asked to:-

- 2.1 Approve** the 2008-09 Year End Report and Final Virements
- 2.2 Note** the CLG funding for 2009-10

3. 2008-09 Year End Report

- 3.1 The Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairs, has agreed the Year End Progress Report for submission to GOWM on 17 April 2009. A copy of the full report will be made available at

http://www.wmra.gov.uk/Meetings_and_Agendas/Full_Assembly/22_April_2009

3.2 Key Points

The **general report** of the Chief Executive [page 2] highlights the impact of the economic downturn and the progress being made on the transition to a new Regional Integrated Strategy.

- 3.3 The **exception report** [pages 5-7] highlights the tasks that are off target or not going to happen; the majority of these are as a result of some facet of SNR. In the year we also took on additional tasks of significance that included responding to the Regional Funding Advice on both transport and housing themes, and then supporting the operation of new Regional Select and Grand committees.

- 3.4 During the year there have been quarterly reviews with colleagues at Government Office to monitor progress so they will be aware of the items in the exception report and a final review meeting for 2008-09 will be held on 30 April.
- 3.5 The **Financial Tables** [pages 32-35] set out the full range of Assembly activity, including that funded by partners. In terms of CLG funds the overall amount was reduced by £100,000 following a request for a contingency to be carried forward into 2009-10 to meet the costs of the delayed Examination in Public. The remaining CLG funds were utilised within the year and in Q4 there were some final virements to meet the overall objectives of the work programme.
- 3.6 There was a further £2,974,359 of partner funds managed via the Assembly work programme on work strands such as housing, health, forestry and rural, as well as regional projects such as Living Well, EUConnects, and several other smaller initiatives such as waste and energy projects. In the final quarter the Assembly also agreed to assist in the wind up of Culture West Midlands by holding a small pot of funds to meet final costs to be administered after the wind up date. F
- 3.7 The year end shows a small surplus of £17,903 after corporation tax and this amount will be transferred to reserves which are to be used to meet any transition costs in the final year of the Assembly.

4. 2009-10 Business Plan & Budget

- 4.1 The Assembly is advised that CLG have now approved the 2009-10 Business Plan and confirmed the funding allocation at **£2,113,946** plus a contingency carried forward from 2008-09 of **£100,000** for the Examination in Public.
- 4.2 The CLG funding offer represents a strict 10% reduction on 2008-09 and is therefore £12,338 less than we requested in the Draft Budget. We will need to review the budget to determine how we meet this reduction but it is likely to be from the EiP contingency.
- 4.3 CLG have also advised that in 2009-10 they will revert to two claim periods of April and October rather than quarterly reporting and we welcome this process change. A copy of the 2009-10 Business Plan is available at;

[http://www.wmra.gov.uk/Meetings and Agendas/Full Assembly/22 April 2009](http://www.wmra.gov.uk/Meetings_and_Agendas/Full_Assembly/22_April_2009)

5. Retrofitting for the Future – Low Carbon Housing – Developing a Baseline for Refurbishment in the West Midlands

- 5.1 The recent UK Green Building Council report Low Carbon Housing emphasised the need for a significant increase in the level of energy efficiency refurbishment in the existing housing sector, and a strong lead from Government to enable industry to increase capacity and innovate.
- 5.2 New and existing housing were both identified as key areas of concern in the West Midlands Regional Climate Change Action Plan, as current indicators are that housing accounts for up to 30 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions in the West Midlands. The Climate Change Action Plan was prepared by the Regional Assembly on behalf of the Region and launched by the Regional Minister Liam Byrne, MP in December 2007 and its implementation is now co-ordinated by GOWM through a virtual office which includes Assembly staff. The Assembly, AWM, Natural England and the Environment Agency remain the partners in the Climate Change Action Plan.
- 5.3 As part of the Action Plan's implementation, WMRA and AWM commissioned an important project to assess the current level of refurbishment in existing housing (social and private sector), the impact on CO₂ reduction and recommend how the region can support households, housing managers and industry in meeting the challenges of an 80% CO₂ reduction target by 2050.
- 5.4 Interest in the retrofitting agenda is increasing rapidly and the Government's current consultation on the 'definition of Zero Carbon' talks about 'allowable solutions' including the possibility of a tax paid by developers to improve the efficiency of existing housing.
- 5.5 The report was launched on Monday 23 March 2009, at the Orange Studio in Birmingham.
- 5.6 For further information please see **Appendix 1**

6. The Strategic Forum for Central Wales and the West Midlands

- 6.1 On behalf of the West Midlands Regional Assembly and the Welsh Assembly Government, the Cross Border Strategic Forum Event is being held at Hope Community Church Conference Centre on 2 April 2009. Ministers, regional partners and stakeholders have been invited to look at what progress has been made since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in 2007.
- 6.2 For further information please see **Appendix 2**

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY (SOCIAL INCLUSION)

- 7.1 Finally, I am pleased to confirm that we have received funding from AWM to enable us to establish an Equality & Diversity team for a 6 month period following the conclusion of the free secondment of Carmel Kerr from the Home Office.
- 7.2 We have appointed Laird Ryan as the Strategic Adviser for Equality and Diversity on a 6 month contract and he will be supported by a policy officer when recruitment is completed.

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