

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

**Draft Notes of the Special Regional Assembly Board of Directors
Meeting Held on 25 February 2009**

Chairman: Cllr David S Smith (Lichfield DC)

Present:

Sarindar Sahota – Vice Chair (WMBC), Roger McKenzie – Vice Chair (OSG), Cllr Chris Saint (Stratford), Cllr Rex Roberts (Staffordshire), Cllr Steven Eling (Sandwell), Cllr Bob Badham (Sandwell), Frances Beatty (WMBC), Cllr Roger Phillips (Herefordshire), Cllr Paul Tilsley (Birmingham) and Cllr Jo Jones (Shrewsbury & Atcham)

In attendance:

Olwen Dutton (WMLGA/WMRA) Mark Middleton (WMRA) and Sharon Doak (WMLGA/WMRA)

1.	Apologies Roger Stone (WMBC), Barrie Williams (WMBC), Beris Williams (Herefordshire), Albert Bore (Birmingham) and John Lines (Birmingham)
2.	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations stated.
3.	SNR Consultation Update/Consultation The Board received a briefing paper on the steps required to implement the SNR in the region and informed them of the steps that are being taken to progress the draft change management plan – the Board’s views were sought about the key issues that should be progressed within that. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Board was invited to discuss the change programme and give their views both in general and also as to the matters of critical importance as they saw them.

A lengthy discussion was held and the following key issues were raised:-

- Partnership working – engagement needs to continue
- It may be perceived that the WMRA focus is entirely on the Economic Strategy and the Regional Spatial Strategy – there is a need to look at all other aspects of the WMRA work. The WMRA is at the forefront of partnership working and we do not want to lose sight on the broader benefits.
- There are capacity issues – there is an emphasis for more work to be undertaken by a smaller band of people.
- CLG will no longer be providing funding for partnership engagement, unless AWM/GOWM offer funding we will lose partners.
- OSG are looking at how they can influence the 'top level' of decision making but agree there are resource and capacity issues. Engagement of partners needs to continue to be meaningful, there would be no point in continued engagement if partners views were not taken account of.
- WMBC agreed that partners needed continued engagement. A lot of time, commitment and compromises had gone into partnership working over the last 5 years and this does not want to be lost. The Leaders Board will not have the time to act on Policies on their own and it is great concern that Officers will lead.
- The Leaders Board will need to take on Board the comments from Partners and discussions will be needed regarding the continued inclusion of Partners. Agreement that to become Officer led due to Leaders capacity constraints would raise great concern. Involvement of all Leaders together will be extremely difficult – work is needed to evolve a structure.
- The Board were reminded that:-
This is Government legislation but we have fought strongly that not all goes to AWM.
The Leaders Group will be made up of all the political groups.
The Task & Finish groups will have more of an output focus and will need consistency.
We have to remember the resource parameters, both financial and staffing within which we are able to operate.
Local Authorities agree that Partnership working is imperative – but we are driven by government legislation.
Transition arrangements are in place – we are more together than other regions.

	<p>The Chairman thanked the Board for their contributions and hoped that wider discussions would continue emphasising the quality, effectiveness and vision of Partnership working.</p> <p>It was AGREED that a further report would be brought to the next meeting on 25 March 2009 prior to submission to Government..</p>
4.	<p>Regional Funding Advice (RFA) Progress and Sign-off Arrangements</p> <p>The Board received a report that set out progress and the work in hand to submit the RFA to the Regional Minister Ian Austin MP, on 27 February 2009.</p> <p>It was recommended and the board AGREED to note and endorse the progress on developing an RFA submission and the sign off arrangements as outlined in the report.</p>
5.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>The Board was advised that Jo Satori who works for EU Connects had won a European award for communicating Best Practice to different audiences across government, communities and European partners.</p> <p>The Chairman requested that Jo be congratulated on behalf of the Assembly.</p>
6.	<p>Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 25 March 2009</p>