













West Midlands Regional Assembly Business Plan and Annual Review July 2006



West Midlands
Regional Assembly
Speaking out for the region

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↘ Chairman's Introduction

This year is our eighth in existence and our role of speaking out for the Region, locally, nationally and in Europe has never been more significant. Too often the West Midlands gets overlooked, but this must change. As an Assembly I believe our role is very much about drawing down power from central government to the regional and local level. It is vital that we work together with partners to lobby Westminster and ensure that decisions made by central government are right for everyone here in the West Midlands. We must have greater control and freedom to determine our future within the framework of our agreed Regional Strategies.

There is a long history of achievement through working co-operatively together in the West Midlands, but we need to step it up a level. As a regional organisation, we are 'uniquely' placed to bring public, private and voluntary sectors to the table – and this partnership working is at the heart of the Assembly's success. The launch of the Concordat at the Assembly's AGM demonstrates the continued commitment we and our partners have to effective partnership work for the Region. However, we must deepen our joint working and ensure that everyone gets behind Regional Strategies, such as the Economic, Spatial and Housing Strategies and works together to achieve them. For example, the Regional Spatial Strategy was produced in a wide and open partnership, but we need to move it on, to deliver it, to really make it happen. Everyone who lives and works in the West Midlands has a role to play in bringing about the transformation that we all desire. However, we must remain focussed and ensure that we do not get distracted from achieving our vision for the West Midlands.



It is also important that at the regional level we keep on refining our existing structures and partnerships to make them more effective and remain open to new ideas and views.

I'm not so naïve as to believe we will all agree on everything. But I am still enough of an optimist to believe that we can come together to deliver consistent messages and take more effective action on those things we can agree on.

David S Smith

Chairman

West Midlands Regional Assembly



The Role of the Regional Assembly

The majority of the Assembly's funding comes from central Government to support and develop the following:-

- The Assembly role as the Regional Planning Body and Regional Housing Board
- The scrutiny of the Regional Development Agency - Advantage West Midlands (AWM)
- The Assembly role as the strategic focal point of the Region

It seeks to undertake these roles in partnership with its constituent partners, regional stakeholders, Government Office of the West Midlands (GOWM) and Advantage West Midlands (AWM). Collectively, the Assembly and its partners are seeking to improve the Region's quality of life. As partners we have described in the Regional Concordat our respective roles and responsibilities and leadership areas.

The Concordat describes our role as:-

"The Assembly is the Regional Planning Body for the West Midlands and is responsible for strategic coherence in regional working. The Assembly promotes the interests of the West Midlands by speaking out on important issues and events affecting the Region and speaking up for the social, environmental, cultural and economic interests of the Region".

The Assembly is a voluntary assembly with membership drawn from all 38 local authorities within the Region (sixty eight Members), the business sector, including higher education, (sixteen Members) and other regional stakeholders (sixteen Members).

The Region's Vision

The overall vision for the West Midlands as agreed by all parties to the Regional Concordat is one of:-

"An economically successful, outward looking and adaptable region, rich in culture and environment, where all people, working together, are able to meet their aspirations and needs without prejudicing the quality of life for future generations."

Purpose of this Business Plan

This Business Plan has two key functions. Firstly, to describe and guide the Assembly's work and enable the Assembly to performance manage its activities. Secondly, as a work programme to secure funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government, to undertake the Assembly's work and comply with their detailed requirements. With finite resources and significant challenges and opportunities facing our Region, the Assembly has to be clear about its areas of work and those which are best left to others.

As with all Assembly documents both the Business Plan and this summary document are available on our website [www.wmra.gov.uk/about us](http://www.wmra.gov.uk/about-us)

The Assembly's Business Plan reflects the underlying commitment from all partners in the Region to work together for a better, sustainable future for the people of the West Midlands.

Our Achievements and Priority Activities

The Assembly's work can broadly be divided into six areas of activity

- 01 Corporate Activity**
- 02 Regional Planning Body (Planning, Housing and Transport)**
- 03 Policy Integration and Development**
- 04 Regional Scrutiny**
- 05 Other Activity**
- 06 Consultations**

Over the next few pages we will look at our achievements over the last 12 months and the progress we have made against the key tasks outlined in the 2005-06 Business Plan, we will then set out our priority activities both for the immediate year ahead and also looking longer-term over the next three years.

01 Corporate Activity

Achievements:

Corporate Governance

Over the last 12 months we have continued with our Corporate Governance Review and in particular ensuring closer alignment between the Assembly and the West Midlands Local Government Association. One of the final pieces of this process will be the recruitment of a new Chief Executive who will sit across the two organisations and ensure that they work together in a unified, joined-up way for the benefit of the Region and regional partners.

Other work has included: a revised risk assessment process; the adoption of a business continuity plan; a new performance management system; a revised personal appraisal and development planning processes; revised governance arrangements to reflect increased planning body work; revised financial systems and contract management; a review and retendering of insurance arrangements. We also undertook a job evaluation of all posts and an efficiency review to address budget pressures.

Probity

Training and workshops for Members have been developed on probity in regional working. We are also leading the development of a Code of Conduct for Regional Planning on behalf of the English Regions Network of regional assemblies (ERN).

Communication & Engagement

We effectively communicated the work and priorities of the Assembly to members, partners, the media and the wider community, including the launch of the Regional Housing Strategy and Regional Homelessness Strategy. We have developed an increasing profile for the Assembly with the public of the West Midlands through the press and media and have continued to work with key regional partners to promote the Region via the Regional Marketing Strategy. A Communications Strategy was also developed, which will inform the work in 2006/07.

Priority Activities:

Corporate Governance

The Assembly must ensure proper governance and effective stewardship of its resources. This is particularly true of an organisation focused on partnership working and utilising public funds. Building on the work to date in delivering our Corporate Governance Action Plan, we will review and refine our approach to risk management, further refine our financial practices and procedures; complete the updating of personnel policies and practices; and keep under review our governance, office support and partnerships to ensure they are fit for purpose.

To give further confidence that the West Midlands is serious about getting the most from public funds, as stated in our Regional Funding Allocation advice to Government, we will establish a Forward Planning Executive, to plan and monitor the progress/sequencing of investment in the Region. The Forward Planning Executive will comprise the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Assembly, the Transport Partnership, the new Housing Board and AWM. It will be supported by the Chief Executives and Directors of Assembly, AWM and Government Office.

We will continue to participate in the debate and Government consultation on regionalism, both as the Assembly and through English Regions Network. We will implement the results of our audit of staff training needs.

Communication & Engagement

The primary role of the Assembly is to bring strategic added-value to the work of the Region and act as a catalyst in Regional Partnership work. At the heart of this is the need to continue communicating effectively in order to engage with people involved in and affected by the Assembly's work.

In 2006-07 we will continue the awareness raising work on the Regional Spatial Strategy and produce a campaign and publications to support Phase Two and Three of the RSS Revision. We will launch the revised and strengthened Concordat for regional partnership working. We will also assist Sustainability West Midlands in publishing and launching version two of the Regional Sustainable Development Framework and promote and support the Assembly's Scrutiny and Strategic Review work. We will continue to support Advantage West Midlands' Marketing the Region programme. We will also be looking at the accessibility of all of our communications materials.

02 Regional Planning Body

Achievements:

Planning

Regional Spatial Strategy

A large percentage of our work over the last 12 months has been focused around Revisions to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

- RSS Revision Phase One – The Black Country Study Project Plan was launched in April 2005. A consultation on Choices took place, which informed the development of the Preferred Option, which in turn was subject to a period of informal engagement before the revision was submitted to the Secretary of State in May 2006.
- RSS Revision Phase Two – The draft project plan was launched in November 2005 and followed by the completion of technical work during the first part of 2006.
- RSS Revision Phase Three – discussion on the timing and coverage of Phase Three started in the final quarter of 2005-06.

We also undertook a number of activities to support the RSS Implementation Framework. These included the development of a training programme for all sectors and organisations involved in the regional spatial planning process and hosting, attending and contributing to numerous events to promote awareness of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

For the past two years the Assembly has been statutorily required to prepare an Annual Monitoring Report. This, along with the application of a policy-focused monitoring framework and the strengthening of the National Core Output Indicators, has helped to drive a continuously improving monitoring system for the Region. The Assembly supported the development of the State of the Region Update Report, which was published by WM Regional Observatory in November 2005.

Another key area of work for us has been around Conformity (assessing the effect of Local Plans on the implementation of the Spatial Strategy). In total, we have dealt with 31 cases during the 12 months to end of March 2006 (all within the statutory timescale) and been involved in two Local Plan Inquiries (LPIs). We have also continued to update the Conformity Protocol.



02 Regional Planning Body

Priority Activities:

The Regional Spatial Strategy

For the next three years the majority of the Assembly's resources will be focused on the Regional Spatial Strategy: implementing, reviewing and monitoring it, ensuring that Local Development Documents conform to the RSS and ensuring that it sets the spatial framework for the Review of the Regional Economic Strategy.

- Regional Spatial Strategy Revision Phase One - Black Country Study. Work with the Black Country Consortium will include preparing for and participating in the Examination in Public of the Phase One Revision to be held in January 2007.
- In 2006-07 technical work will inform the development of spatial options covering the following policy issues:- housing and employment land requirements and distribution; waste management; transport and accessibility.
- Regional Spatial Strategy Revision Phase Three – Technical work will commence in the last quarter of 2006-07. This will focus on environmental matters, rural service delivery, recreation provision and locations for gypsies and travellers' sites.

We will also continue to take forward activities in the Implementation Framework.

As well as publishing an Annual Monitoring Report we will have our first Contextual Report focusing on Urban and Rural Renaissance. By the end of the year we aim to have an agreed monitoring framework for both the Regional Planning Body and Housing Strategy. The RSS Partial Review will provide a further opportunity to revisit the monitoring framework, to strengthen it and to ensure that it is "fit for purpose".

We anticipate a busy year for conformity matters working with local authorities on Local Development Frameworks and regionally significant planning applications.

02 Regional Planning Body

Achievements:

Economy

The Regional Centres Study work was signed off in February 2006 and the Black Country Centres Study submitted to the Secretary of State as part of the RSS Phase One Revision package. Work was also undertaken with Government Office and Advantage West Midlands on Regional Funding Allocations. Initial work has also been carried out with Advantage West Midlands to secure alignment between the RSS Revision and the Regional Economic Strategy Review.

Transport

The Transport Partnership has led the regional transport agenda. The inaugural Transport Delivery Plan was launched setting out timescales for delivering transport infrastructure. Work was undertaken to ensure that Local Transport Plans were delivering the regional priorities of the Regional Transport Strategy. The Regional Transport Partnership supported technical studies to progress the RSS Revision and was also utilised to support the Regional Transport Priority Framework in response to the Government's Regional Funding Allocation Guidelines.

Housing

In June 2005 we submitted the Regional Housing Strategy 2005-2021 to ODPM. This followed an extensive period of research, evidence gathering and consultation co-ordinated by the Assembly Secretariat on behalf of the Regional Housing Partnership and Board. The Strategy was launched in December 2005. During 2005-06 four Housing Market Area Partnerships were developed as key groups to implement the Strategy at the local level. We also gave verbal evidence to MPs at the ODPM Select Committee Inquiry into 'Affordability and the Supply of Affordable Housing'. In January 2006 the Assembly submitted its proposals to ODPM for the merger of the housing function into the Assembly, which is scheduled for September 2006.

Environment and Waste

The Regional Environment Partnership has worked with partners to develop work on waste, woodlands, green space planning and biodiversity. We have continued to undertake research on waste which provides

background for development of the Phase Two options. The Partnership has endorsed the production of a Woodlands Opportunities map for use by local authorities and other partners and has developed a prospectus looking at the application of Green Infrastructure Planning to the Region. Further work has been supported on the development of guidance and new maps for the 14 Biodiversity Enhancement Areas across the Region and we also contributed to the delivery of biodiversity funding programmes.

Urban & Rural Renaissance

We established a Rural Renaissance Working Group which is taking forward a work programme based on the Regional Spatial Strategy Implementation Plan. Two key pieces of research have been completed providing rural evidence feeding into Phase Three of RSS Partial Review. The Urban and Rural Renaissance working groups have developed the Joint Renaissance Statement, which was launched in March 2006. We have also been involved in discussions around the proposals for two City Regions in the West Midlands, which are supported by the Assembly as delivery vehicles for the urban renaissance elements of the Regional Spatial Strategy urban renaissance.

Sustainable Communities Plan

Initial consultation on Smart Growth – Midlands Way was completed in April 2005. Towards the latter part of 2005-06 the Regional Development Agencies along with the Assemblies and Government Offices in the East and West Midlands commenced work on a draft Development Plan for Midlands Way.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development was adopted as the central principle of the Assembly's work and an officer group was established for sustainable development. Sustainability West Midlands (SWM) has continued to lead the development of the Regional Sustainable Development Framework (RSDf) on behalf of the Assembly. During 2005-06 the RSDf has been shared with each Assembly Partnership and used to assist their work.

02 Regional Planning Body

Priority Activities:

Transport

Transport is a key element of the RSS Revision Phase One and Two and as a strategic issue remains a key priority for the Region. Resource will be concentrated on taking the RSS Revision forward. In addition we will complete an update of the Regional Transport Delivery Plan and bring it into line with work undertaken to prepare for the submission of advice from the Region to Government on Regional Funding Allocations.

Housing

The Regional Housing Strategy 2005-2021, which was agreed and published last year, will be used to guide Government investment in housing within the Region through local authorities and registered social landlords. It will also be used to guide private sector development. By September 2006 we aim to have established new governance arrangements for regional housing following the merger of the regional housing function into the Assembly. These new arrangements will facilitate a more coherent approach across spatial planning and strategic housing functions.

Environment and waste

We will continue working with partners to enhance and conserve the Region's urban and rural environments, principally through the Assembly's Regional Environment Partnership. The Partnership will be involved in preparing the regional waste strategy as part of the RSS Phase Two and preparing the research background for RSS Phase Three. The strengthening of the regional approach to climate change will be a key challenge, together with the development of a Brownfield land Action Plan for the Black Country, and the integration of the two new River Basin Management Plan initiatives into regional proposals.

Urban & Rural Renaissance

The Assembly will continue to ensure that the City Region approach being developed by the seven Metropolitan Boroughs and Telford and the proposal from Stoke are taken forward as an integral part of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy. They have the potential to provide a key delivery vehicle for urban renaissance. The Assembly will work with the City Region partners to secure appropriate working and governance arrangements to ensure that the aims and targets within the Spatial Strategy are achievable.

Sustainable Communities Plan

We will continue to work with partners to take forward the principles of the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan being taken forward in 'Smart Growth – Midlands Way' by the West and East Midlands. By early 2006-07 the partners aim to have a draft development plan in place for discussion with regionally based organisations and Government, the focus will then be on delivery.

Sustainable Development

RSDF Version Two will be launched early 2006-07. It will build on the experience of testing and piloting Version One and incorporate key elements of the National Sustainable Development Plan launched last year. The RSDF will continue to be a key document for supporting and guiding regional strategies and policy development. We will also work with regional partners to develop the Region's response to 'Securing the Regions' Futures' a joint DEFRA/DTI/ODPM report on regional arrangements for delivering sustainable development.

03 Policy Development and Integration

From the outset the Assembly sought to provide an overview of regional strategies and plans. This aim was formally strengthened in the Regions White Paper, where the Assemblies and Government Offices were given a joint responsibility for making regional strategies and plans more coherent.

A key focus for the Assembly is to ensure consistency of the Regional Spatial Strategy with other regional strategies and plans, together with Local Development Frameworks. The relationship between the Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Spatial Strategy, Regional Housing Strategy and the Regional Sustainable Development Framework is essential and we work closely with Advantage West Midlands, Government Office and Sustainability West Midlands to ensure consistency in these documents.

Achievements:

We have sought to ensure that regional strategies, policies and action plans developed in 2005-06 have reflected the above commitment to coherence and consistency. Examples include the Regional Housing Strategy.

Regional Funding Allocations

Working in partnership with Government Office and Advantage West Midlands the Assembly developed advice to Government on Regional Funding Allocations. This work reflected the close alignment of key strategies which we have in the West Midlands and the regional partners' commitment to confirm the key priorities for the Region in respect to housing, transport and economic development.

Social Inclusion

The Strategic Review of Equalities and Diversity was completed and recommendations endorsed by the Assembly in January 2006. A new Equalities and Diversity Partnership was also established and held its first meeting at the end of March 2006.

Health

The Regional Health Partnership was active in taking forward the agreed Action Plan. There was a particular emphasis during the year to progress the 'Promoting Healthy Lifestyles' Plan, this included setting up a website, launch of the Everyday Sport Campaign and the appointment of a Physical Activity Co-ordinator.

Culture

Following the successful bid for London to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, regional co-ordinating structures (led by the Assembly) have been established to maximise opportunities for the Region. We also developed youth engagement by securing representation on the regional working group from West Midlands members of the UK Youth Parliament. The Regional Cultural Consortium, previously West Midlands Life, became Culture West Midlands in 2005 and launched the Actions Update to the current Regional Cultural Strategy.

Europe

The European Partnership has been focused on activities set out in the European Strategic Framework. In particular it has reviewed the contribution of the West Midlands to the Lisbon Agenda, this work will continue into 2006-07. A series of seminars was hosted under the badge "Europe Unravelling", these targeted European Partnership members, local Government and business partners.

03 Policy Development and Integration

Priority Activities:

Regional Funding Allocations

During 2006-07 we will work with Advantage West Midlands and Government Office plus other regional partners to take forward the work we scoped out in our submission to Government on Regional Funding Allocations (for economic development, housing and transport). Our aim will be to prepare a set of agreed strategic priorities which are evidence based. Beneath these will be a clear set of strategic funding priorities, which reflect a sequenced approach to planned investment across the three funding strands for maximum impact.

West Midlands Regional Concordat

The Concordat will be reviewed during the early part of 2006, the review has been delayed to enable us to properly consider outcomes and issues from our submission to Government on Regional Funding Allocations. From this work we anticipate the need for a review of regional structures and governance arrangements.

Regional Economic Strategy (RES) – Review

The Assembly was invited to jointly launch the Review with AWM in March 06 and will be actively involved in the process. We anticipate all Assembly Partnerships having a strategic role and input. In addition we will work with Advantage West Midlands to ensure that the Review of the Economic Strategy and the Revision of the Spatial Strategy are mutually informative, supportive and aligned.

Equality and Diversity

In 2006-07 we will implement those recommendations which the Strategic Review of Equality and Diversity suggests we should lead on and encourage partners to implement and make recommendations. We are pleased to welcome a secondee from the Home Office for the period 2006-09, which will provide a

tremendous opportunity for the Assembly to give leadership to this important and challenging regional issue. We are also planning to host an event in the Autumn for regional leaders on Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion matters.

Health

Along with partners on the regional Health Partnership we are seeking to ensure that the Region becomes healthier. Our roles are to host the Partnership's key worker, and facilitate and support the Partnership's meetings and networks. A five year Regional Health Strategy will be developed from spring 2006. We will contribute to ensuring that regional policies including the Spatial Strategy are 'health proofed' to ensure they support these aims. On the latter, the Phase Two and Three Revisions will include health related spatial issues.

Culture

We will continue to work with Culture WM, to deliver the Cultural Strategy Action Plan. This seeks to make the Region a special place. This will include working with the Planning Partnership to ensure that the Spatial Strategy supports the overall strategic objective. We will continue to play a lead role in regional structures established to maximise the benefits to the Region from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Europe

It is important for the Region to be recognised as a world class region in the newly enlarged Europe and beyond, this requires us to engage fully with Europe. To achieve this with partners we will take forward the European Action Plan. A key task will be to prepare for the Region's European Structural funds programmes 2007-13 and to prepare the Region for the policy, legislative and funding challenges emerging in the EU's Review of its Lisbon Agenda for competitiveness and the knowledge economy, social cohesion and sustainable development.

04 Scrutiny and Strategic Review

Scrutiny of the Regional Development Agency, Advantage West Midlands (AWM) is a core activity for all Regional Assemblies. We also undertake to carry out at least one Strategic, or thematic review per year which looks at wider regional issues.

Achievements:

We carried out a review and update of the scrutiny and strategic review process with a revised protocol being agreed by Advantage West Midlands, the Assembly and GOWM in July 2005. This was successfully piloted by the Scrutiny Review of High Technology Corridors. The Scrutiny Review of Advantage West Midlands' Support for Rural Renaissance has also been completed together with a Strategic Review of Equalities and Diversity. This thematic Review has resulted in a three-year, funded secondment of an Equalities and Diversity Director from the Home Office.

Priority Activities:

Scrutiny of Advantage West Midlands will remain a core activity for the Assembly, and we will continue to act as a critical friend. Specific reviews planned include; Business Clusters, Support for the Skills Agenda and Advantage West Midlands' implementation of the recommendations made by the Review of Regeneration Zones. A Strategic Review into the relationship the Region wants with Europe, post funding changes in 2007 is also planned. Further scrutiny review topics will be identified during the year in conjunction with Advantage West Midlands. Other work includes an economic analysis project to feed into the Review of the Regional Economic Strategy and working with Advantage West Midlands with regard to the National Audit Office Independent Assessment Process which will begin in September 2006.



Achievements:

Energy

Regional partners secured DTI funding for the West Midlands Energy Office (Energy West Midlands). The Office was established, a Regional Energy Advisor appointed and an Energy Advisory Board established. The Action Plan to take forward the Energy Strategy was launched in July 2005.

Forestry

The WM Forestry Forum continued to lead the forestry and woodland agenda. It prepared its first Action Plan and appointed its first Action Plan Manager, based at the Partnership Centre. The work of the Forum is influencing the agendas and activities of Assembly Partnerships, especially those for Environment and Planning.

Skills

The regional skills agenda and the Assembly's contribution to it have developed significantly in 2005-06. The Assembly's Chief Executive had observer status on the Regional Skills Partnership and actively developed links with local authorities and established mechanisms to facilitate links with developing Local Area Agreements.

English Regions Network (ERN)

For the past two years the Assembly has chaired the English Regions Network (the umbrella organisation for the eight English regions). We have also chaired the Chief Executives' Group, Policy Directors' group, Planning Officers' Group, Scrutiny Group and Brussels office network as well as contributed to many submissions to Government. We have led ERN's relationship with both the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministers. The Assembly hosts the network. The ERN Annual conference was held at Warwick University and its Scrutiny Conference was held at Birmingham Hippodrome.

Priority Activities:

Energy

The year ahead will see a concentration on delivering against the activities set out in the Energy Action Plan. Progress on delivery will be measured via the monitoring strategy which is being developed by the Regional Observatory. Later in the year a Business Plan will be developed and submitted to DTI for further, more long-term support. The Energy Advisory Board will make an input to Government's consultation on the Energy Review.

Forestry

The West Midlands now has a clear Forestry Framework Delivery Plan in place, the objective of which is to create a viable and inclusive woodland and forestry sector. As with all regional strategies/activities there is tremendous buy-in from regional partners to take this work forward. Other work includes involvement in the England Forestry Strategy revision: England's Trees, Woods and Forests.

Skills

The Assembly has not sought to play a central role in the skills agenda for the West Midlands, but acknowledges the importance of the issues through its designation of the Regional Skills Partnership as the Policy Partnership for the Region. The Assembly has observer status on the Partnership and has designated the Regional Director of Learning and Skills Councils as Advisor to the Assembly. The Assembly is concerned to ensure that there is proper integration of the skills agenda with other regional strategies, particularly the implementation of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

English Regions Network

The West Midlands will continue to host the English Regions Network. Until July 06 we will continue to chair the organisation and a number of its key bodies. We will continue play a leading role in the network's relationship with the Department for Communities and Local Government.

06 Consultation Work

The Assembly has an important role in speaking out for people and acting as the voice for the Region. During 2005/06 the Assembly was involved in a wide range of consultations, both leading our own with the public and responding to government-led consultations.

Government-led consultations		Assembly-led Consultations	
Affordability and Supply of Affordable Homes	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	Regional Housing Strategy	WMRA
Eddington Transport Study	Department for Transport and Treasury	Consultation on RSS Phase Two draft Project Plan	WMRA
Establishment of a Commission for Equality and Human Rights: A Regional Presence,	Department for Trade and Industry	Consultation on Black Country Choices	WMRA (Black Country Consortium)
'Getting Equal: Proposals to Outlaw Sexual Orientation Discrimination in the Provision of Goods & Services.	Department for Trade and Industry	Draft Regional Freight Strategy	WMRA
Merger Proposals of Regional Housing Board with Regional Planning Body	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	Draft Regional Sustainable Development Framework version 2	WMRA
National Waste Strategy	Department for Environment, food and Rural Affairs	Draft Scrutiny Reports - High Technology Corridors	WMRA
Planning Gain Supplement	Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	Draft Scrutiny Reports - AWM Support for Rural Renaissance	WMRA
Rail Closures	Department for Transport	Draft Strategic Review - Equalities and Diversity in the Region	WMRA
Regional Funding Allocations	Treasury/Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Department for Transport and Department of Trade & Industry		
River Basin Management Planning	Environment Agency		
Route Utilisation Studies (Great Western and West Midlands)	Network Rail		
Tourism and Regional Spatial Strategies	Department for Culture Media and Sport		
WM Rural Delivery Framework	Department for Environment, food and Rural Affairs		

How We Work

The Assembly is located within the Regional Partnership Centre in Birmingham. The Partnership Centre is operated by West Midlands Local Government Association and is also host to Culture West Midlands, West Midlands Business Council and West Midlands Strategic Partnership for Asylum and Refugee Support. It has also recently welcomed a number of new partners including the West Midlands Centre of Excellence, City Regions, Skills Active and KIDS. West Midlands Local Government Association provides all our corporate services such as ICT, HR, and committee administration. We provide their policy advice. West Midlands Business Council services the business representatives on the Assembly, Regional Action West Midlands (RAWM) services the other stakeholders group and West Midlands Local Government Association nominates and supports the Local Authority Members of the Assembly who give the Assembly its democratic legitimacy. We look to the Regional Observatory for monitoring data and they also publish the State of The Region Report.

The breadth of our work plan and the level of resources available mean that the Assembly relies on the contribution in both resources and kind from partner organisations within the West Midlands.

- Strategic Local Authorities within the Region provide policy advice on all aspects of the RSS.
- Sustainability West Midlands advises us on sustainable development.
- West Midlands in Europe (WMIE - the Region's office in Brussels) provides advice on Europe and acts as the Region's voice in Brussels.
- Advantage West Midlands continues to lead on the Regional Marketing Strategy.

- Work on securing benefits for the Region from the 2012 Olympics is supported by Culture West Midlands, Sport England WM, Advantage West Midlands, local authorities across the West Midlands, Tourism West Midlands and Government Office among others.
- The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) support us via their regional director who acts as the Assembly's honorary Skills Advisor.
- The Regional Director of Public Health (from GOWM) acts as a strategic lead/link to the Department of Health and regional health providers. The Department of Health supports our work on the Regional Health Priorities.
- Government Office West Midlands, Natural England partners and the Forestry Commission support our work on forestry.
- The Department of Trade and Industry supports our work on the Regional Energy Strategy.

The Assembly is indebted to the numerous individual businesses, trade and professional organisations, voluntary organisations, charities, trade unions, further and higher education institutions, health trusts and other health providers, local authorities, town and parish councils, the youth parliament, community and environmental groups, regional bodies and national organisations based in the Region, who both support and enable their representatives to contribute to the work of the Assembly for the Region.

The Assembly's work is primarily undertaken through policy partnerships. Details of these can be found on our website, as can full details of the Assembly's members.

Managing and Measuring our Future Performance

For each of the activities described in the plan we have prepared detailed work plans called work strands which are available on www.wmra.gov.uk at About Us/Assembly Business Plan 2006-9. For clarity the work strand numbering is cross referenced to the relevant budget line. The key tasks outlined will also be utilised in the work programmes for both teams and individual members of staff. In each work strand we have indicated at least one activity or measure of performance which is critical for the next year - we will report on our progress every six months against these.

Identifying the risks we face

Our Audit committee is responsible for overseeing an assessment of both the key risks we face as an organisation and the steps which need to be taken to mitigate these risks. A risk assessment exercise was undertaken during last year. This year we will be undertaking a review of our risk assessment process which will include addressing the issue of business continuity. In advance of this we have identified risk and mitigation measures against each work strand.

A key risk we wish to reduce in the next three years is the potential resource costs relating to Public and Local Planning Inquiries and other proceedings which may arise from our responsibilities as Regional Planning Body.



Income and Expenditure / Budget

Our Income and Expenditure for 2005/06 and our Budget for 2006/07 are shown on the inside of this fold out section.

Income and Expenditure 2005/06

INCOME	WS	Revised Budget	Totals for 2005-06
ODPM Funding	1	2,065,000	2,085,812
ODPM for Black Country Study	2	0	100,000
Regional Housing Board Funding	3	0	0
Advantage West Midlands	4	2,500	2,500
Advantage West Midlands	5	150,000	15,000
Forestry Commission	6	60,998	94,012
Department of Health	7	58,966	59,749
English Regions Network	8	15,000	15,000
Energy Office (DTI)	9	231,412	231,412
Other Income			74,361
		Total	2,583,876
			2,677,846
EXPENDITURE			
Corporate			
Staffing	10	1,035,950	1,021,167
Staff Training (CPD)	11	10,000	5,214
Members Allowance	12	10,000	9,463
Operational	13	134,200	148,891
Communications	14	55,000	54,948
		Sub Total	1,239,683
Planning, Housing & Transport			
Implementation	15	20,000	9,563
Monitoring	16	113,500	113,196
Conformity	17	25,000	25,523
Review (Comms/Involvement)	18	20,000	10,525
Urban & Rural Renaissance	19	67,000	55,368
Increase Partnering/Participation	20	30,000	30,000
Black Country Study	21	165,000	265,000
Transport	22	89,500	59,142
RTPP	23	150,000	15,000
Housing	24	20,000	20,324
Housing Board	25	0	0
Environment	26	49,500	50,673
Sustainable Development	27	65,000	65,873
Economy	28	39,000	39,000
Legal Expenses (inc Contingency)	29	5,000	78,378
		Sub Total	837,565
Strategic Review	30	50,427	49,752
Policy Integration & Development			
Health	31	69,389	69,749
Europe & International Policy	32	18,000	20,177
Social Inclusion	33	10,000	17,847
Culture & Skills	34	5,000	10,320
Rural	35	10,000	9,968
WMRO State of Region	36	25,000	25,000
		Sub Total	153,061
Other Activities			
Forestry	37	60,998	94,012
Regional Energy	38	231,412	231,412
Other Expenditure			52,197
		Sub Total	377,621
		Total	2,657,682
Reserve			20,164

INCOME	WS	2006-07
ODPM Funding	1	2,172,000
ODPM Legal Contingency	1	55,716
ODPM for Black Country Study	2	0
Regional Housing Board Funding	3	46,210
Partner Support (housing)	4	15,697
Advantage West Midlands RTPP	5	0
Forestry Commission	6	24,000
Department of Health	7	18,000
English Regions Network	8	5,000
Energy Office (DTI)	9	100,000
		Total
		2,436,623
EXPENDITURE		
Corporate		
Staffing	10	1,115,393
Staff Training (CPD)	11	11,000
Members Allowance	12	15,000
Operational	13	125,804
Communications	14	55,000
		Sub Total
		1,322,197
Planning, Housing & Transport		
Implementation	15	32,000
Monitoring	16	223,500
Conformity	17	20,000
RSS Revision	18	167,500
Urban & Rural Renaissance	19	39,000
Increase Partnering/Participation	20	31,000
Black Country Study	21	100,000
Transport	22	19,500
RTPP	23	0
Housing	24	19,500
Regional Housing Board	25	46,210
Environment	26	43,500
Sustainable Development	27	20,000
Economy	28	39,000
Legal Expenses	29	61,716
		Sub Total
		862,426
Strategic Review	30	30,000
Policy Integration & Development		
Health	31	28,000
Europe & International Policy	32	15,000
Social Inclusion	33	10,000
Culture & Skills	34	10,000
Rural	35	10,000
WMRO State of Region	36	25,000
		Sub Total
		98,000
Other Activities		
Forestry	37	24,000
Regional Energy	38	100,000
		Sub Total
		124,000
		Total
		2,436,623

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