

Agenda Item No. 12

**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
Assembly Meeting – 17 January 2007**

REGIONAL POLICY PARTNERSHIPS ACTIVITY

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Regional Assembly on the current status and activities of Regional Partnerships, established by or working closely with the West Midlands Regional Assembly.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Regional Assembly considers the report.

3. Partnerships

There are a number of Regional Policy Partnerships which are led by or have representation from the Assembly. The following report provides details of current activities and priorities for each of the Partnerships. Additional information regarding past activities and future plans can be obtained from the named officer contact. Appendix 1 provides contact details for all officers that support these partnerships.

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3.1 **Planning Partnership and Executive**

Chair of Partnership – Cllr Rex Roberts OBE, Staffordshire CC
Officer Contact – Alex Angus

Purpose - The Regional Planning Partnership, supported by the Planning Executive, carries out the Regional Planning Body function on behalf of the Regional Assembly leading on the development and delivery of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

Current Activities:

RSS Revision

- Phase One – The Examination in Public began on 9th January 2007 with the Panel Report due in Spring 2007.
- Phase Two - An eight week public consultation on the 'Spatial Options' for future development across the Region was launched on 8th January 2007. A Consultation Analysis Report on the Spatial Options is due in Spring 2007. Work on the Preferred Option will begin in March and the Final submission to Secretary of State will be in December 2007.
- Phase Three - Due to begin in Spring 2007, this stage will look at critical rural services, recreational provision, regionally significant environmental issues and the development of a framework for provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites.

Monitoring and Implementation

- Housing and Regional Employment Land Supplementary Reports were published in December 2006.
- Annual Monitoring Report is due for publication February 2007.
- A supplementary paper assessing the implications of the proposed housing numbers is being published alongside the Spatial Options in January 2007.
- A revised monitoring framework is being developed as a component of Phase Two of the RSS Revision. It will incorporate new targets and indicators proposed as part of the Phase One submission along with any others that may arise in the future as part of Phase Three.
- Current refreshment and refinement of RSS implementation Plan due for completion end of 2006. Work will begin on the development of an Implementation Framework to accompany the Preferred Option in the New Year.

Conformity

- A Conformity Panel will be established to help undertake the conformity role. Alternates are to be agreed at the next Regional Planning Executive meeting in the new year.

- A revised Conformity Protocol will be tabled at first Regional Planning Partnership in the new year – subject to the outcome of legal advice.

3.2 **Transport Partnership**

Chair of Partnership – Cllr Roger Phillips, Herefordshire Council
Officer Contact – Danny Lamb

Purpose – To hold policy lead responsibility for transport and to support and advise the Regional Assembly and the Planning Partnership/Executive.

Current Activities:

RSS Revision Phase 2 - The Regional Transport Strategy policy options for the RSS Phase 2 Revision have been considered by a wide range of stakeholders and are currently being consulted upon.

Regional Funding Allocations (RFA) - The DfT has confirmed that the RFA process will continue and that they will be seeking further advice from the Regions within two years (possibly Summer 2008).

Gridlock or Growth Green Paper - A congestion management study has been produced for the West Midlands Metropolitan area. A response was submitted on behalf of the Transport Partnership within the consultation period. The Transport Partnership will follow the development of the study to argue that any proposals consider the impact upon the wider Region

Eddington Transport Study - The Study, commissioned to examine the long-term links between transport and the UK's economic productivity, growth and stability has been published and the Transport Partnership will be addressing the implications for the Region at the 5th February meeting

Transport Delivery Plan: 2nd Edition - The Region's Transport Delivery Plan is in the process of being updated. This will provide updated information on transport interventions planned across the Region until 2011.

WMES - The Transport Partnership will respond to the current West Midlands Economic Strategy Review Policy Choices consultation.

3.3 **Housing Partnership (RHP)**

Chair of Partnership – Cllr John Lines, Birmingham City Council
Officer Contact – Jo Hill

Purpose – On behalf of the Regional Assembly the aim of the Partnership is to provide leadership, coherence and support to the

achievement of the Regional Housing Strategy for the Region and to advise Ministers on housing priorities in the Region.

Current Activities:

The Regional Housing Partnership (the wider reference group to the Regional Housing Executive) met for its first full meeting on 16 November 2006 and explored the key housing aspects of housing growth, housing distribution and housing mix, within the RSS Revision Phase Two process

The 'Regional Guide to the Delivery of Affordable Housing' was formally launched at the RHP meeting on 16 November 2006 has been very well-received by Assembly Members, local authority Officers and Other Stakeholder Groups.

Regional Housing Allocations Strategy - The Regional Housing Executive, supported by the Regional Housing Advisory Forum has commenced activity on the development of the Regional Allocations Strategy for 2008 – 2011. An Officer Stakeholder event is planned for early January 2007 and a progress report will be presented to the next RHE meeting being held on 31 January 2007

The Housing Secretariat has worked in partnership with the Housing Corporation to secure funding to commission a Consultant to assist in the production of a Regional Interim Statement on Gypsy and Traveller Policy (due to be delivered to DCLG by 31 March 2007).

The Regional Housing Advisory Forum has continued in a consultative role on housing issues in the development of the Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country City Region initiative and will offer assistance in shaping the housing content in line with the RHS 2005.

The Regional Housing Executive has made a recommendation on submissions to the Gypsy & Traveller Site Grants Round 2, to DCLG and will be responsible for making recommendations in further rounds in 2007/2008

A sub group of the Regional Housing Advisory Forum, the Housing Regeneration Challenge Group (HRCG) has been established. It will act as a forum to share experience in delivering urban regeneration and in developing the Urban perspective to compliment the Rural Housing Network's (RHN) rural voice within the Region

The Housing Secretariat will continue to provide guidance for the four Housing Market Area Partnerships (HMAPs) together with both GOWM and the Housing Corporation.

The Housing Secretariat has contributed to the NHF/CIH Midlands United Campaign, to heighten the profile of the WM Region at the National level.

3.4 **European and International Partnership**

Chair of Partnership – Cllr Sir Albert Bore, Birmingham City Council
Officer Contact – Esther Knight

Purpose: To provide the West Midlands with the means of agreeing a single, coherent, cross sector voice on European policy issues of importance within the region. It also provides wider policy context for the work of West Midlands partners and the West Midlands in Europe office in Brussels.

Selection of Current Activities includes:

The European and International Affairs Partnership will consider the annual European Commission work plan along regional priorities.

Following a presentation on the Regional Spatial Strategy options, the partnership will submit a response to the current consultation process.

The partnership will be inputting into and co-ordinating regional responses to the following consultations

- the Regional Competitiveness and Employment programme,
- the European Social Fund national programme,
- the Regional Competitiveness and Employment management arrangements

As part of its programme of Strategic Policy reviews the Assembly's Scrutiny team are undertaking a review of the effectiveness of regional European working. A draft report will be out to consultation at the end of February 2007

3.5 **Health Partnership**

Acting Chair of the Partnership – Cllr Steve Eling, Sandwell MBC
Officer contact – Zena Lynch

Purpose – to work in partnership to address health inequalities, ensure better health and to improve quality of life within the West Midlands.

Current Activities:

The consultation draft of the Regional Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be considered under a separate item on the agenda. Please refer to paper that accompanies agenda item 8 for additional information. The consultation period will run from February to May 2007 and an interactive consultation on the is planned at an event on March 28th 2007.

A successful stage one 'Living Well in the West Midlands' Well-being fund application to the Big Lottery Fund has been made and the

West Midlands Regional Assembly has been invited to make a stage 2 bid of up to £6.82 million by March 2007.

NHS as a Good Corporate Citizen - The West Midlands Regional Office for the Department of Health have set up a Good Corporate Citizen Network for Trusts, looking at environmental issues that affect trusts such as waste, energy, water, catering and transport

3.6 **Environment Partnership**

Chair - Cllr Keith Austin, Borough of Telford and Wrekin Council
Officer Contact - Chris Blakeley

Purpose – To support and advise the Assembly on Environmental Issues and move forward the implementation of key policy areas.

Current Activities:

The 2007/08 Forward Plan for the Partnership is being prepared with Partners, the Chair will be representing the Assembly at the Regional Waste Summit 'Waste is Money' in February 2007.

Reported the outcomes of the Climate Change Conference to Partnerships and set up Regional Climate Change task group to carry forward actions including the production of the Climate Change Action Plan by April 2007 which will seek to integrate low carbon approaches and adaptation to a changing climate into strategic regional processes and projects. Additional information on Climate Change is being reported to the Assembly under agenda item 10.

Secured WMRA funding and partners funding to carry out five additional environmental projects to support the production of the Regional Spatial Strategy, including the first carbon scoping of the RSS options, the screening stage of the European Habitat sites across the region and the regions first Regional Flood Risk Assessment. Two additional waste projects to support the evidence base of the Phase 2 RSS have also been let. A report of the environmental implications of the RSS options has been completed by partners to provide technical advice during the consultation period. A RSS waste technical report has been completed which has supported the development of the Regional Waste Strategy which forms part of the RSS Phase 2 consultation. A draft input into the RSS Annual Monitoring Report has been completed by the Regional Environmental Monitoring Officers Group

The Green Infrastructure Prospectus has been launched which sets out the regional vision and aims for green infrastructure and the many benefits that it provides. Following the approval of New Growth Point funding, there is now an opportunity to ensure a consistent approach to the development of Green Infrastructure in partnership with Natural England.

Following the production of the annual 'Heritage Counts' Report (which reports on the state of the region's historic environment), work is continuing on the early scoping of a Regional Historic Environment Strategy.

3.7 **Social Inclusion Partnership**

Chair – Cllr Jo Jones, Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council
Officer Contact – Carmel Kerr

Current Activities:

The Partnership is on target in achieving its objectives as set out in the recommendations from the outcome of the Strategic Review of Equality and Diversity

The Partnership continues to work closely with the Transition Team for the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. Consultation events were hosted by the Partnership on 28th & 29th November 2006 with stakeholders from across the region to look at their requirements and how the regional CEHR presence can best deliver them in the West Midlands. Several follow-up events were held in December 2006 to test the findings of the earlier events. The Partnership, with the agreement of the ERN, will look to set-up a regional network to look at the roll-out of the CEHR across the regions.

Work is being taken forward with GOWM, WMRO and AWM on the community cohesion and social inclusion agendas for the region

The Partnership has planned the following consultation events for:

- 16th January: Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 2
- 23rd January: Regional Economic Strategy
- 25th January: Regional Leaders' Summit
- NB: All local Leaders and LA Chief Executives have been invited. Meg Munn, MP (Minister, DCLG) will be the keynote speaker. Michael Cashman, MEP will chair.
- 9th February: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) event
- 24th April: Regional Health and Well-being Strategy (and has a presence on the Steering Group)

Findings from the above events will form the basis of the Partnership's responses to these consultations – particular focus will be on the Sustainability Appraisal and the application of the RSDF.

It is also contributing to the work of the Regional Health Partnership on its Big Lottery Bid, and with GOWM and AWM on the ERDF.

The Partnership acts as the Steering Body for SWM's Social Capital, Equality & Diversity Programme

3.8 **Sustainable Development Partnership (Sustainability West Midlands)**

Chair of Partnership – Bernard Doyle
Officer Contact – John Sharpe / David Clarke

Purpose – Sustainability West Midlands (SWM) is the regional champion of sustainable development and the Assembly's independent advisory partnership on sustainable development.

SWM aims to achieve a more sustainable region by developing a continually improving link between sustainable policy and sustainability in practice.

Current Activities:

RSS Partial Revision Phase 2 - SWM Chaired the Task Group responsible for preparing the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the RSS Partial Revision Phase 2. The SA was signed off by the Chair of SWM in October but "refreshed" in December in the light of updated Option 2 housing figures for the Metropolitan Area. SWM ambassadors have also input into the RSS Reference Groups with a view to ensuring that sustainable development principles are incorporated in to the RSS Partial Revision Phase 2.

Regional Planning Checklist - The Assembly has jointly led with AWM the development of a West Midlands planning sustainability checklist. It is currently being drafted for "piloting" and targeted consultation.

Climate Change – Following the Assembly's Climate Change conference in October, a Climate Change Task Group has been established with a view to developing a Regional Climate Change Action Plan.

The Sustainable Housing Action Programme (SHAP) 2005-2006 identified a number of key activities that SWM and/ or other key agencies should aim to implement during 2006-2007. These activities will help embed sustainable energy best practice into the housing planning and development decision-making process.

3.9 **Cultural Partnership (Culture West Midlands – The Regional Cultural Consortium)**

Chair of Partnership – Brian Woods Scawen DL
Officer Contact – Jenny Drew

Purpose – West Midlands Life is one of eight Regional Cultural Consortia in England and is the cultural 'mouthpiece' for the West Midlands, ensuring that culture and creativity get a fair hearing across the region. It has four main areas of responsibility strategy development, advocacy, advisory, identifying and brokering links.

Current Activities:

London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games

Work is continuing to maximise the benefits for the region from the 2012 Games. Recent activity has included:

- Appointing a dedicated WM Co-ordinator for the 2012 Games to be based at the Regional Partnership Centre – reporting to Culture WM
- Hosted, in partnership with other organisations in the region a 2012-themed visit to the region by Lord Coe in December 2006.
- Publicising the process for assessing the region's offer for the national Pre-Games Training Camps manual (in line with national guidelines and in partnership with Sport England WM)
- Developing the regional plan to maximise opportunities from the 2012 Games

Current regional priorities for the 2012 games are currently:

- Developing a regional 2012 communications plan
- Organising a Westminster briefing for the region's MPs on the region's response to the 2012 Games
- A regional 2012 Conference scheduled for 21 March 2007

Cultural Partnership

- Dr Brian Woods Scawen has been reappointed by Culture Minister David Lammy MP as Chair of the WM Regional Cultural Consortium for a further four year term
- The Equality and Diversity action group is currently out to tender for consultants to undertake review of policy and practice across the sector (funded by Sport England)
- The Cultural Forum are to establish a sub group to take forward issues around Culture and Places - picking up Cultural input to the RSS and responding to the White Paper
- Coming shortly - Growing the Cultural Economy - facts and figures to support input to the RES
- Culture West Midlands and the regional Cultural forum have discussed further with the Black Country Consortium to their 'Living Landmark' proposals.

3.10 **Rural Partnership (Regional Rural Affairs Forum)**

Chair of Partnership – Rev'd Nick Read
Officer Contact – Kate Docherty

Purpose – The purpose of the West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum is to bring together rural stakeholders within the region to inform and monitor the delivery of policy in rural areas.

Current Activities include:

- Developing the West Midlands Regional Implementation Plan for the Rural Development Programme for England.
- Developing responses to the WMES / WMRSS consultations.
- Rural proofing the development of the WMES and the WMRSS Phase Two options.
- Strengthening connections to DEFRA and working to develop direct relationships with other government departments. Initially discussions have been held with DCLG on affordable rural housing.
- Developing a regional response to the DEFRA Rural Affordable housing Commission's report of findings.

Appendix 1

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