

Agenda Item No. 3b
WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
Board of Directors – 9 March 2007

DRAFT DECISION NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY BOARD OF DIRECTORS HELD ON 8 DECEMBER 2006

Chairman: Cllr David S. Smith (Lichfield)

1.	<p>Apologies and Attendance The Apologies and Attendance of Board members are attached as Appendix 1</p>
2.	<p>Chairman's and Vice Chairs' Report</p> <p>Cllr David S Smith (Chairman) advised Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • of the recent publication of the Local Government White Paper. • That he had been invited as key speaker at an ACAS dinner to be held in the region <p>Dr Sarindar Singh Sahota (Vice-Chair, Business) informed the Board;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that work was continuing on issues relating to the Milton Keynes/South Midlands growth area. The Terms of Reference for this group would be considered by the Regional Planning Executive in February 2007. • That Barrie Williams had been elected as the Chairman of the West Midlands Business Council following the departure of John Hart. <p>In response, Cllr Chris Saint in his capacity as Chair of the 2012 Leadership Group welcomed the appointment of Barrie Williams; wished the contribution of John Hart to the group to be acknowledged; and sought assurance that the business sector would continue their attendance at the 2012 Leadership group.</p>
3.	<p>Board of Directors Decisions of the Board of Directors held on 6 October The Board noted the matters as considered at the meeting held on 6 October 2006 which were not otherwise subject of a report to the full Assembly on 25 October 2006</p>
4.	<p>Draft Decision Notes of the Assembly Meeting held on the 25 October 2006</p> <p>The draft decision notes of the meeting held on 25 October were noted in advance of formal agreement which would be sought at the Assembly meeting on 17 January 2007.</p>
5.	<p>Regional Partnerships Review The report, introduced by the Chairman, sought agreement to conduct a review of the work, focus, and direction of the Regional Partnership organisation and approval to the principal terms of reference and methodology.</p>

Dr Sahota welcomed the proposal and stated that it was an ideal opportunity to further consider and develop Assembly issues e.g Corporate Governance.

In wider discussion, the following points were raised:

- An awareness would be required of wider regional and sub regional governance structures e.g police and health
- Wider discussions were to be held with other regions to discuss effective regional working and engagement with national bodies (in particular the national Local Government Association).
- The Review would provide an opportunity to 'be brave'
- The review should give suitable consideration to who the Assembly works as a wider partnership of diverse sectoral interests
- The Other Stakeholder group requested that consideration be given to widening the composition of the group to allow for appropriate dialogue and communication.
- Review Group members, regardless of numbers or sectoral nomination, should contribute positively to the review for the benefit of all and not attend with a 'single agenda' approach.
- The co-option/secondment of individuals could be considered to the Group if and when required
- There was a need to develop and strengthen engagement with the region's MPs

In response the Chief Executive stated that;

- Membership of the group had been determined due to the fact that the review would encompass WMLGA, WMRA and WMiE.
- The intention of the review would be to consider external factors and not solely to consider the Regional Partnership organisations
- A balance would need to be struck between considering known and possible future impacts whilst also ensuring swift delivery e.g CSR07
- A key driver for the review was delivering value for money

Jim Graham, Partnership Secretary advised the Board:

- that a review would provide a vehicle to consider important factors such as the local Government white Paper, which he considered provided an opportunity, and the CSR07, which could be considered as a threat.
- that an event would be coordinated (out of parliamentary sitting) to which all the region's MPs and MEPs would be invited to attend
- That personal discussions were being held with the national LGA to underline the negative perceptions that were being held of them in certain circles.

The Board agreed to:

- a) Approve the proposals for a wide ranging review of regional partnership activity, as set out in this report, and;
- b) To note that the WMLGA Executive Committee approved the use of WMLGA reserves, up to the value of £15,000, in order to meet any additional costs associated with undertaking the review
- c) Amend the terms of reference for the group to include the following points:

	<p>(i) The co-option/secondment of individuals to be considered to the Group if and when required</p> <p>(ii) Group members should contribute to the review as a whole and not solely attend with a 'single agenda'</p>
6.	<p>Draft Business plan 2007/08</p> <p>The Chief Executive advised the Board that the Draft Business Plan and Budget 2007-08 was more concise in its content than in previous years. The document had been developed in a manner which gave regard to the CSRO7 and its possible impacts. It was stated that the document would be submitted to Government Office for discussion as part of the business planning process.</p> <p>Following some issues of clarification, it was stated that the West Midlands Regional Assembly would be looking again at refreshing the region's transport priorities and how they would be funded.</p> <p>In her closing remarks, the Chief Executive advised the Board that the Eddington Report referred to sub national decision making and stated that this issue would need to be appropriately addressed and referred to Government. The board was additionally advised that the English Regions Network would be discussing Assembly budgets at a future meeting, however the chief Executive emphasised that a reduction in any funding could not be realistically sustained without the need to fundamentally re-assess services provided by WMRA</p> <p>The Board of Directors agreed to :</p> <p>(a) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman, Vice Chairs and Secretary to progress the business planning process with a view to providing a Final Draft Plan for the Assembly's approval at its meeting on 17 January 2007.</p> <p>(b) Support a request to DCLG for a legal contingency fund to carry forward into 2007-08.</p>
7.	<p>Corporate Secretary Report</p> <p>The Board was asked to consider, as part of the general review of WMRA partnerships, specific matters pertaining to memberships and modus operandi which included; rules concerning quorums for meetings; positions of Chair and Vice Chair; review of memberships of partnerships; representation on the Rural Affairs Forum.</p> <p>The Board of Directors agreed:</p> <p>(a) <i>Rules concerning quorums for meetings</i></p> <p>(i) The adoption of the following protocols for Assembly structures: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The general quorum for all Assembly partnership meetings shall be set at 33.3% of membership. <p>Within that overall total: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sectoral quorum requirements for the Planning and Housing Partnerships shall be a minimum 8 local government, 2 business and 2 other stakeholders members

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sectoral quorum requirements for the Planning Executive and Housing Executive shall be a minimum of 4 local government, 1 business and 1 other stakeholders members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sectoral quorum requirements for other Assembly partnerships shall be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Core group of 6 with at least 1 local government, 1 business and 1 other stakeholder ➤ Core group of 12 with at least 2 local government, 1 business and 1 other stakeholder (ii) that the rules concerning transacting business in the event of an inquorate meeting be varied as set out below: <i>'An inquorate meeting is permitted to continue to consider business matters with their decisions classed only as recommendations pending ratification at the next appropriate meeting with executive authority i.e. either the particular committee or sub-committee, the Board or full Assembly'.</i> (b) <i>Chairs and Vice-Chairs</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) To the adoption of protocols concerning the positions of Chair and Vice-Chairs on Assembly member structures as outlined below and to amend the various terms of reference of such bodies as required. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The positions of Chair and Vice-Chair on all Assembly member structures shall be filled by members of the Assembly company. • The Chairs of bodies legally designated as committees or sub-committees of the Board must be chaired by a WMRA Director. • Specifically the Chair and three Vice-Chairs of the Planning Partnership/Executive and the Chair/Local Government Vice-Chair of the Housing Executive shall be WMRA Directors (ii) For the following rule to be applied to all Assembly structures; <i>'In the event of a tied vote, there is no Chair's casting vote'</i> (c) <i>Memberships Review – Progress Report</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) to note that the Equality and Diversity Partnership membership was under review and that a report outlining revised membership to the would be submitted to a future meeting of the Assembly. (ii) to retain the current membership arrangements for the Transport Partnership for the time being, to be fully reviewed in 2007 (iii) to note the progress of the membership of the Regional Health Partnership, the outcomes of which would be brought to the Board at a future meeting. (d) Assembly Representation on the Regional Rural Affairs Forum (RRAF) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) To replace the vacancy left by David Littlemore with a business or other stakeholder representative from the Assembly.
8.	<p>Regional Planning Partnership – 16 November 2006 The Board agreed to ratify all the decisions of the Regional Planning Partnership meeting held on Thursday 16 November 2006.</p>

9.	<p>Scrutiny and Strategic Review</p> <p>(a) European and Strategic Review Members noted the update which provided an outline of the progress in the Strategic Review of the Region's Relationship with Europe.</p> <p>(b) Scrutiny and Strategic Review Update The Board noted the content of the report which highlighted the substantive matters considered by the Strategic Review Group at their last meeting. The Board particularly noted the proposed strategic review on the Regional Approach to Post 16 Education, Training and Skills would be a joint activity between the Assembly and the Learning and Skills Council</p>
10.	<p>Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and Regional Economic Strategy (WMES) : Policy Choices</p> <p>The report outlined the key issues being addressed within the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy and the West Midlands Economic Strategy, both of which were currently under revision and review respectively. The report also identified how the processes for the review and the revision were aligned and give consideration to the current consultation documents for both strategies.</p> <p>It was stated that whilst there were possible areas for potential clashes within both strategies, it was emphasised that it was important to explore and debate joint issues. Many WMRA Partnerships had received an opportunity to discuss the RSS and their views would be welcomed to feed into the consultation process.</p> <p>In discussion the following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the region to be serious about tackling issues such as the RSS, Climate Change etc, there was a need for employment land to be located close to housing land. The principle for this parallel arrangement should be accepted. • The pressures within the metropolitan area were great and there was a need to protect employment land as these was a need to ensure the supply good quality industrial land • The Business sector members expressed their full support to the Black Country Study, but emphasised that they were concerned that the transport infrastructure may not be robust enough to be sustainable. • The issue was raised of the links between employment and transport, especially in relation to low paid workers and disaffected communities. 5 of the 20 poorest constituencies in the UK were in and around central Birmingham. <p>The Board noted the contents of the report and further encouraged those WMRA Partnerships that had not discussed the RSS to do so and to submit responses to the upcoming consultation.</p>
11.	<p>Health and Wellbeing Strategy</p> <p>The Chief Executive advised the Board of the emerging priorities and</p>

	<p>visions in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which, through the Health Partnership, would be owned by the Assembly. It was stated that a wide ranging consultation on the strategy would commence in February 2007. The Board was further advised that the Strategic Health Authority would be undertaking a parallel consultation.</p> <p>In discussion, Members of the Board expressed their concerns regarding the pressures on local government budgets, and that in times of financial constraints it was often services such as leisure, which contribute significantly to supporting the preventative agenda, which would be cut. The Board was also advised of the publication of the results of Sport England's 'Active People Survey' report, the largest single survey of sport and active recreation ever undertaken across all regions. The results of the survey found that people in the West Midlands region were among the most inactive in the country.</p> <p>The Board agreed to note the content of the report and endorsed the proposed consultation process as outlined in the report.</p>
12.	<p>Climate Change – Next Steps</p> <p>The Board noted the steps being taken by the Regional Assembly in response to the climate change challenge following its recent Annual Conference.</p> <p>It was further agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) a carbon audit be undertaken at a future Regional Assembly event or meeting. (ii) Consideration be given to the wider procurement agenda e.g London Transport only procure Carbon Free buses
13.	<p>City Regions</p> <p>The Directors received and noted the report which provided an update on City Region activity and outlined the Birmingham, Black Country and Coventry City Region 2020 Vision Statement.</p>
14.	<p>The Future of Local Government</p> <p>The Board noted the content of the report which updated members on the recent developments affecting the WMLGA and local government in the Region.</p>
15.	<p>Draft Agenda for the Assembly Meeting to be held on 17 January 2007</p> <p>The draft agenda for the meeting on 17 January was tabled at the Board Meeting and was agreed</p>
16.	<p>Dates of future Meetings</p> <p>Members noted the dates of future meetings as 9 March and 8 June 2007</p>

Present: Cllr David S Smith – Chairman

Cllr Terry Dix
Cllr Jo Jones
Cllr Chris Saint
Cllr Roger Phillips
Cllr Bob Badham
Cllr John Lines
Cllr Chris Saint
Roger McKenzie
Dr Sarindar Singh Sahota

Officers:
Olwen Dutton
Jim Graham
Phil Davis
Rose Poulter
Sian Clark