

Agenda Item 19 – For Information

**West Midlands
Regional Assembly**

**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
Assembly Board of Directors – 24 September 2008**

Advantage West Midlands Board Minutes

NON CONFIDENTIAL

Minutes from the 102nd Board meeting held on 20 May 2008

Present:

Nick Paul Chairman
Cllr Richard Hyde Deputy Chairman
Cllr Diane Rayner
John Crabtree
Gerard Coyne
Cllr Roger Lawrence
David Smith
Sue Prince
Jas Bains
Michael Oakes
Prof Michael Sterling
Brendan Connor
Dr David Brown
Angela Maxwell
Cllr Ken Taylor

Executive:

Mick Laverty Chief Executive
Tim Gebbels Corporate Director for Strategy and Communications
Richard Hutchins Corporate Director for Economic Development
Karen Yeomans Corporate Director, Operations
Mark Pearce Corporate Director for Economic Regeneration

In attendance:

Trudi Elliott Regional Director, Government Office West Midlands
Sue Marwa Interim Head of Board Support

ITEM DETAILS ACTION

1. Minutes from the last meeting

1.1 The minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

2. Matters arising

2.1 There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. Confidential item

4. Declarations of Interest

4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. Declarations of items of any other business

5.1 No other business was declared.

ADVANTAGE WEST MIDLANDS

Minutes of the 103rd Board meeting held on 24 June 2008

Present:

Nick Paul	Chairman
Cllr Richard Hyde	Deputy Chairman – items 1 to 9
Jas Bains	
Dr David Brown	
Brendan Connor	
Gerard Coyne	
Cllr Roger Lawrence	
Angela Maxwell	
Michael Oakes	items 1 to (partial) 9
Cllr Diane Rayner	
Prof Michael Sterling	
Cllr Ken Taylor	

Executive:

Mick Laverty	Chief Executive
Tim Gebbels	Corporate Director, Strategy and Communications
Richard Hutchins	Corporate Director, Economic Development
Mark Pearce	Corporate Director, Economic Regeneration
Karen Yeomans	Corporate Director, Operations

Apologies:

John Crabtree
Sue Prince
David Smith

In attendance:

Trudi Elliott	Regional Director, Government Office West Midlands
Sue Marwa	Board Support Executive
Dylan Murphy	Head of Board Support

ITEM	DETAILS	ACTION
1	Minutes of the last meeting	
1.1	The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2008.	

2	Matters arising	
2.1	There were no matters arising from the minutes.	
3	Confidential item	
4	Declarations of Interest	
4.1	There were no declarations of interest.	
5	Confidential item	
6	Chairman's Report	
6.1	The Chairman welcomed Dylan Murphy to his first Board Meeting.	
6.2	The Chairman presented his Report and drew particular attention to the following item:	
6.3	<u>Item 1 – “Measuring the Size of the Challenge” Dinner</u> The “Measuring the Size of the Challenge” Dinner on 4 June had been a successful event. Good progress had been made in articulating the “size of the challenge” and there had subsequently been a meeting of the Economic Inclusion Panel (which would be reported under “any other business”).	
6.4	The Board noted the Chairman's Report.	
7	Chief Executive's Report	
7.1	The Chief Executive presented his Report and drew particular attention to the following items:	
7.2	<u>Item 1 – National Audit Office (NAO) review of Regional Development Agencies' Performance on Physical Regeneration</u> The Chief Executive reported that the NAO had postponed study and its visit to the Agency and other Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and had requested some additional information within a tight timescale which the Agency would provide.	
7.3	<u>Item 2 – West Midlands Parliamentary Labour MPs' Dinner</u> The Chief Executive reported that 25 of the regional MPs had attended the Dinner, including the Ministers Liam Byrne, Ian Pearson and Pat McFadden. The event had highlighted the current lack of systematic, regular engagement with MPs. It was also recognised that communication with MPs should be simplified and a one page briefing on the role of the Agency would be produced. It was noted that this type of briefing document would also assist local councillors.	
7.4	It was agreed that the Agency would undertake a process of engagement with regional MPs.	

<p>7.5</p> <p>7.6</p> <p>7.7</p> <p>7.8</p> <p>7.9</p> <p>7.10</p> <p>7.11</p> <p>7.12</p>	<p><u>Item 3 – Eco-towns Update</u></p> <p>The Chief Executive reported that the deadline for responding to the <i>Eco-towns - Living a Greener Future</i> consultation was 30 June 2008. The draft response was intended to be constructive, highlighting interest in the potential benefits of the programme while making some specific points about the suitability of the two shortlisted schemes within the region (within the context of the Regional Economic Strategy).</p> <p>Members considered the consultation and the revised draft response, which incorporated the comments of Sue Prince and David Brown, and noted that:</p> <p>The Eco-town proposals were distinct from the objectives of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The RSS housing targets were already challenging. This point should be made more strongly in the Agency’s response.</p> <p>The concept of bringing jobs and housing together was a good one but providing housing before the required infrastructure and jobs were in place was not the best means of achieving this objective. The costs of providing the necessary infrastructure, such as schools and roads, would be enormous and there seemed to be no plan for creating the required jobs. The response should stress the potential scale of associated infrastructure costs much more forcefully.</p> <p>The zero-carbon target was based upon the unrealistic expectation that residents would live and work within Eco-towns and did not consider the impact of residents commuting to other areas (which was likely to be the case in reality).</p> <p>The principle of developing sustainable communities was extremely important. This objective could best be achieved through existing programmes such as the Agency’s market towns initiative however.</p> <p>The environmental aspects of the eco-town concept were to be applauded but concentrating efforts in existing urban areas such as the Bilston Urban Village development could achieve the environmental objectives without incurring similar infrastructure pressures.</p> <p>The costs involved in developing the proposed Eco-towns could lead to affordability issues and the developments could then be confined to exclusive dwellings. This was at odds with the drive to provide affordable housing.</p>	
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7.13	The development of the proposed sites would have knock-on effects in neighbouring communities such as Stratford upon Avon which should be taken into account.	Mark Pearce	
7.14	The Agency's response should stress that the Agency had concerns about the proposals and go on to state the areas of principle which were supported.		
7.15	The Board agreed that the Agency's draft response should be revised to reflect members' comments and circulated to members.		
7.16	<u>Item 4 – Advantage West Midlands Conference</u> The Chief Executive reported that Councillor Richard Hyde had agreed to compere the AWM Conference. David Smith, Chief Executive of Jaguar-Land Rover, would be a key note speaker and either the Chief Executive or Chairman of Channel 4 would also speak. There would also be sessions from the Chairman, reviewing his six year tenure; Liam Byrne, on a specific topic yet to be decided and the Chief Executive, on the West Midlands Economic Strategy.		
7.17	The Board agreed that an update report, including details of the Conference breakout sessions, should be presented to the July Board meeting.		Chief Executive
7.18	<u>Item 5 - Spotlight</u> The Chief Executive reported that Chris Sanderson, Government and External Relations Executive, had received the Agency's spotlight award for his work organising the BERR Select Committee.		
7.19	The Board noted the Chief Executive's Report.		
8	Confidential item		
9	Update on the Sub National Review (SNR)		
9.1	Mark Pearce, Corporate Director – Economic Regeneration presented an update on key matters relating to the SNR.		
9.2	The Board considered the collective RDA response to the <i>Prosperous Places: Taking Forward the Review of Sub National Economic Development and Regeneration</i> consultation and noted the following points:		

9.3	One North East had been the lead Agency in developing the collective RDA response. The collective response was a compromise which reflected the fact that differing partnership working arrangements existed within regions. The positive relationships within the West Midlands were balanced against views from other regions in the collective response. The Board noted the joint RDA response.	
9.4	It was noted that the joint RDA response did not incorporate the Agency's suggestion of a tripartite approach to the capacity and capability review of local authority partners. The Agency had not felt that this omission warranted a separate response.	
9.5	The West Midlands SNR Strategic Transition Group had developed a regional response to the consultation which set out a series of principles and was set in the context of efforts to tackle the £10bn output gap. The agreement of a joint response represented a significant achievement and reflected the excellent joint working arrangements within the region. The ability to present a united front was hugely important and added significant weight to the response.	
9.6	The Board endorsed the West Midlands regional response to the <i>Prosperous Places: Taking Forward the Review of Sub National Economic Development and Regeneration</i> consultation.	
9.7	The Chairman congratulated Rose Poulter and the SNR Transition team on their work to produce the regional submission.	
9.8	It was recognised that the Government response to the consultation was not expected until October and further work was required by other agencies before a definite position was reached. To allow time for debate, the Board agreed that an initial discussion on SNR issues should take place on the evening of 28 July ahead of the Board meeting the next day to be followed by an Awayday (over a Friday to Saturday lunchtime) in September and a further session in November.	Chief Executive
9.9	It was noted that an audit of existing partnerships was already underway. It was also noted that consideration should be given to gaps in existing partnership working arrangements (i.e. thought should be given to who the Agency should engage with, irrespective of existing arrangements).	

10	Business Support Simplification Programme	
10.1	Dr Richard Hutchins, Corporate Director – Economic Development presented an update report on the Business Support Simplification Programme (BSSP).	

10.2	Members noted that the Executive Group which reported to the Enterprise Board provided the required governance arrangements within the region and there was a regional transition plan in place.
10.3	The Board considered the list of the 30 BSSP approved product areas outlined at Annex 1 of the submitted report and noted that:
10.4	BSSP was a policy based approach rather than a business process based approach (as had been the case with the Enterprise Board Strategy).
10.5	The product area descriptors were those used by Government. The descriptors would not be meaningful to businesses and it was difficult to differentiate them in some cases. It was not intended that they would be presented in these terms and branding work was ongoing.
10.6	The “Innovation Vouchers” had been added to the approved product framework. The “Advantage Transition Bridge Fund” was not currently an approved product. The Regional Finance Forum would continue to stress the business case and lobby for its inclusion on the basis of regional need but current assessments were made on the basis of the national economic case only.
10.7	There was significant political pressure to deliver BSSP and RDAs were to be assessed on how they delivered the transition process. The Agency’s Transition Plan had received an initial grading of “Amber.”
10.8	It was noted that the Agency was currently leading a “mapping and gapping” exercise and had asked local authorities and higher education institutions to provide details of their existing business support programmes. Effective engagement with partners was critical and two officers were working with local authority partners. It was also noted that there was an opportunity to engage with the Higher Education Funding Council and that the role of professional organisations in the delivery of business support should be recognised.

10.9	The business view had been that existing business support provision was extremely confusing and simplified systems enabling easier access to services were required. Martin Temple of the Engineering Employers Federation had been appointed to Chair the national Transition Management Board.	
10.10	It would be essential to ensure that businesses were provided with a comprehensive guide to the business support services available to them. It would also be important to ensure continuity of advice during the transition to BSSP.	
10.11	The Board agreed that the necessary short-term actions should be taken to ensure the Agency achieved a “Green”	Dr Richard

	rating for its transition plan.	Hutchins
10.12	The Board noted that the case should continue to be made that business need and particular regional economic needs should be the primary considerations in the delivery of business support services.	Dr Richard Hutchins
10.13	The Board noted the update and agreed that a further report on progress should be presented in October.	Dr Richard Hutchins
11.	Confidential item	
12.	Confidential item	
13	Confidential item	