

## Agenda Item No. 4

### WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Board of Directors – 2 December 2005

### DECISION NOTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2005

**Present:** Cllr David S Smith (Chairman); Cllr Claude Bodenham (South Shropshire), Cllr Sir Albert Bore (Birmingham), John Hart (WMBC), Cllr Jo Jones (Shrewsbury and Atcham), Cllr John Lines (Birmingham), David Littlemore (OSG), Roger MacKenzie (OSG), Elizabeth Newman (OSG), Rex Roberts OBE (Staffordshire), Cllr Chris Saint (Stratford), Brian Summers (WMBC) and Cllr Paul Tilsley (Birmingham).

*In attendance:* Trudi Elliott (WMRA), Steve Hind (WMLGA), Nigel Summers (Regional Partnership Secretary) and Daryl Davies (WMLGA).

*Observer:* Chris Bonnard (RAWM).

**Apologies:** Cllr Keith Austin (Telford and Wrekin), Valerie Broom (OSG), Graham Garbutt (GOWM), Cllr Roger Phillips (Herefordshire), Rose Poulter (WMRA) and Ben Reid (WMBC).

**Declarations of Interests** Cllr Sir Albert Bore declared an interest as a Director of the NEC under the Casinos item. (This was not the subject of formal discussion).

**Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairs of the Board of Directors** The Board **elected** Cllr David S Smith as Chairman of the Board of Directors for the ensuing year.  
The Board **elected** the following as Vice-Chairs of the Board of Directors for the ensuing year:

Valerie Broom (Other Stakeholder)  
Ben Reid (Business)  
Cllr Mick Salih (Local Government)

**Chairman's report** None.

**Decision notes of the Board of Directors Meeting held on 24 June, 2005** The decision notes of the Board of Directors Meeting held on 24 June 2005 were **agreed** as a true record.

**Decision notes of the Audit Committee held on 8 April 2005**

The decision notes of the Audit Committee held on 8 April 2005 were **noted**.

**Decision Notes of the Annual General Meeting held on 15 July, 2005**

The decision notes of the Annual General Meeting held on 15 July, 2005 were **noted**.

**Assembly Commitment to Sustainable Development**

A report setting out the ongoing work to promote sustainable development in regional working was considered.

The report contained a proposal that the Regional Assembly should formally adopt sustainable development, as the route to maximising current and future quality of life for all, as the central principle of its work, in order to meet its existing commitments and to fulfil the recommendations of the 2004 strategic review of sustainable development in the region.

The Board:

- (a) **endorsed** the proposal that sustainable development should be adopted as the central principle of Assembly working; and
- (b) **agreed** that the proposal be submitted to the full Assembly meeting on 26 October 2005 for approval.

**Regional Funding Allocation – ‘Rolling Briefing Note’**

The Board considered a briefing note which provided a summary of Government’s proposals set out in ‘Regional Funding Allocations’ and outlined action required by regional partners to submit West Midlands advice on funding priorities for housing, economic development and transport to Government by 31 January 2006.

During discussion, the Board again expressed regret that skills funding was not featured more significantly given the issues within this Region. It was keen to see an integration of the respective areas of activity and an avoidance of a silo approach. Reference was made to paragraph 3.5 of the report which stated that there was unlikely to be a case made for altering the balance of spending.

The Board felt it should not be assumed there would be no change.

### **Recommendation**

The contents of the report and comments made during the discussion were **noted**.

## **Review of the West Midlands Economic Strategy**

A report setting out Advantage West Midlands (AWM) proposed approach to the forthcoming review of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) was considered.

The Board was interested in how AWM would assess what had gone well and what had not, what had worked and what had not. How gaps in RES coverage would be identified and how future monitoring would occur. The importance of a robust evidence base was stressed.

The Board **noted** the proposed approach and **agreed** to a more detailed report being brought to the full Assembly meeting in October.

## **ODPM Consultation: Planning for Housing Provision**

A report advising that the Assembly Board Chair and Vice-Chairs together with the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Regional Planning Partnership had agreed a response to the ODPM's consultation paper 'Planning for Housing Provision' was submitted.

During discussion, concern was expressed that the proposals could reverse the Regional Spatial Strategy. In addition, the Board stated that the Regional Assembly, through the Regional Planning Partnership, should retain discretion in regionally significant planning applications and the interpretation of national policy to regional circumstances.

It also expressed concern about the degree of reliance on planning gain to deliver affordable and social housing.

This provoked an extensive discussion on the perceived impact of the RSS on affordable housing in rural housing, the need for new and innovative solutions and the concern in some parts of the region about the number of houses they will be able in future to build.

Steve Forrest was present for the discussion.

The Board **supported** the action taken by the Assembly Board and Planning Partnership's chair and vice chairs, in submitting a response to ODPM to the consultation document 'Planning for Housing Provision'.

### **West Midlands Region – Incorporating a City Region Approach**

A discussion paper setting out the emerging City Region debate in the context of the Assembly's core activities and regional agenda was considered. It was stressed that this was about the Metropolitan area delivering their part of the urban renaissance agenda and thus the RSS and the RES.

The role and contribution of other places within the region was stressed (Para 3.10 and 7<sup>th</sup> Para on page 10 need to be expanded).

The content of the report and the comments made by members were **noted**.

### **Audit Accounts**

The Financial Statements for the West Midlands Regional Assembly Limited for financial year ended 31st March 2005, as audited by Clement Keys and appended to this report, were considered.

Alan Robertson (Clement Keys) and Sharon Phillips (WMLGA) were present for this item.

During his remarks, Alan Robertson recommended that in future year's reference should be made to the corporate governance of the Company within the Directors' report over and above the minimum legal requirement.

The Board **noted** the content of the report and

- (a) **approved** the Financial Statements for 2004-05
- (b) **confirmed** a depreciation policy for Computers at 33%
- (c) **confirmed** if the 'Directors' would want to make any comment within the final accounts
- (d) **recommended** re-appointment of Clement Keys as auditors for 2005-06
- (e) **agreed** that in future years greater reference would be made to corporate governance of the Company within the Directors report.

### **Procedural Issue – Quorum**

Trudi Elliott advised the Board that that a quorum for Board meetings is subject to a minimum of 8 directors with at least 4 local government Directors,

at least 1 business sector Director and at least 1 Other Stakeholder Group Director being present.

She had been advised that due that a Director present would need to leave the meeting due to a commitment involving the ministerial visit.

The Board **agreed** the remaining recommendations 'on block' and **instructed** the Secretariat to take the necessary action in respect of those matters unresolved.

The Chairman then declared the meeting closed. The remaining items (which were not formally discussed) are set out below:-

**The Region's response to London's successful bid for the Olympics and Para-Olympics in 2012**

A progress report advising on developing the Region's response to the successful London 2012 bid was considered.

The Board

- (a) **endorsed** the draft composition and terms of reference of the West Midlands 2012 Regional Leadership Group.
- (b) endorsed Cllr Chris Saint, Portfolio Holder for Culture, as the WMRA member of the Leadership Task Group and instructed the Secretariat to seek from the Board of Directors not present an alternate for him.

**Regional Engagement in the European Agenda**

A report seeking agreement to the future approach to regional engagement in the European agenda was considered.

The Board

- (a) **agreed** that the existing principal regional partnership arrangements of the Regional European and International Affairs Partnership (EIAP) and the West Midlands in Europe Partnership (WMIe) continue for the time being.
- (b) **endorsed** a closer alignment of the EIAP and WMIe through cross membership and co-ordination of objectives and activities
- (c) **agreed** that the Assembly contribute to and support a cross agency virtual European secretariat.

**Regional Energy**

A progress report on implementing the Regional

## **Office**

Energy Strategy was considered.

In addition, the report outlined the proposal for extending the Regional Energy Advisor's contract for a additional 6 month period with the option for a further 6 months pending Board approval.

The Board

- (a) **noted** the content of the report and in particular the proposed date of 12 October 2005 for the launch of the Regional Energy Office - Energy West Midlands.
- (b) **endorsed** the 6 month extension of the contract for the Regional Energy Advisor.

## **Scrutiny Review of High Technology Corridors – Final Report**

A report presenting the recommendations arising from the scrutiny review together with Advantage West Midlands' response was submitted for information. The complete report would be submitted to the Full Assembly on 26 October.

The Board **noted** the recommendations of the scrutiny report and Advantage West Midlands' response.

## **Casinos – Potential Impacts for the Region**

This report provided information in respect of the key legislative and administrative changes arising from the Gambling Act 2005 as they relate to the provision of new casino enterprises within the U.K., and to advise on the form of Regional Assembly/Regional Planning Body submission, if any, which would be considered to engage with the Government's Advisory Panel once it was established.

A summary of the potential economic impacts identified by research commissioned in other regions was presented along with an update on the level of known casino developer interest within the West Midlands.

## **First Quarter Budget and Performance**

The Board **noted** the report and **agreed** to await the further technical advice to be prepared by the Regional Advisory Group.

The results for April to June 2005-06 against budget, as set out in Appendix A to this report, were submitted.

This report also highlighted any significant variations to the budget that had been identified in the first quarter analysis and proposed a number of virements as set out in the revised budget at Appendix B to the report.

The Board

- (a) **noted** the detail of the report and indicative savings on staffing.
- (b) **approved** the proposed virement of £42,000 from the Staff budget [WS10] to support other work strands as summarised below and detailed in the proposed revised budget at Appendix B:

[WS13] £29,000 of savings were committed to support increased Operational costs [3.2.2]

[WS29] £5,000 of savings were committed to support Planning Legal Expenses [3.2.4]

[WS32] £8,000 of savings from the European post be reallocated as a working budget for Europe [3.2.]

- (c) **noted** that this re-allocation of funds was best explained as a £21,000 saving on Planning salaries utilised to fund £21,000 of legal and planning-related operational costs.

The balance of the virements for Europe and Operational costs were being met from savings on other salary costs.

- (d) **agreed** that the Assembly should aim to provide support of £5,000 for the 2012 London Olympics with a view to meeting this sum from any further savings identified later in the year [3.2.3].

## **Company Secretary's Report**

### **Appointments to Outside Bodies**

The Board considered various appointments to outside bodies.

The Board

- (a) **appointed** Roger MacKenzie as the Regional Assembly representative on the West Midlands Regional Observatory.
- (b) **appointed** Elizabeth Newman as the Regional Assembly representative on MLA – West Midlands: The Regional Council for Museums, Libraries and Archives.
- (c) **noted** the position regarding the appointment to Sustainability West Midlands Board.
- (d) **instructed** the Secretariat to seek expressions of interests from the Board of Directors not present at the meeting for the appointments of an Alternate Member for the West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum and a Full Member to the Shropshire Partnership - Sustainable Communities Steering Group.

### **Composition of Audit Committee**

The Board considered a proposed amendment to the composition of the Audit Committee following the increase in the number of Directors as agreed at the Annual General Meeting.

The Board **agreed** that

- (a) the existing terms of reference be amended to increase the composition of the Audit Committee from four to eight members, to comprise two members from each sector of Assembly membership, all drawn from the Board of Directors.
- (b) the remaining terms of reference be unchanged.

### **Feedback from Annual General Meeting and Partnership Event – July 2005**

The Board were provided with feedback from the Annual General Meeting and Partnership event.

The report set out for comparison the cost of the events in 2004 and 2005. In addition, it detailed general observations regarding this year's event and set out a proposal for 2006.

The Board **noted** the report.

### **Implementing Job Evaluation**

A report advising of the implementation of job evaluation and potential implications were considered.

As an employer, WMLGA must be confident in the robustness of its pay and remuneration policy and

be able to objectively justify pay differentials. To ensure this a pay review based on job evaluation using external consultants was considered to be the only practical solution.

The costs of which would be met from additional income generated by the People and Organisational Directorate.

The outcomes were unlikely to be delivered at no cost. However, the exercise was intended to focus upon consolidation of grades rather than any substantial impact on the hierarchy.

The Board **noted** the report.