

Agenda Item No. 6

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY Board of Directors - Friday 10th March 2006

Policy Issues

Report of the Director of Policy (WMRA)

1. Regional Concordat

1.1. Purpose

To advise the Board on progress in updating the Regional Concordat.

1.2. Recommendation

To note progress and endorse the approach suggested to revise the WM Regional Concordat.

1.3. Background

Regional partners have committed themselves to reviewing the Concordat on a regular basis to ensure it is 'fit for purpose' and sufficiently in tune with the ever changing European, national, regional and local backdrops. The Board will recall that the purpose of the Concordat is to provide a framework for partnership working between regional organisations and for the integration of regional strategies. It is an agreement that reflects partners' respective roles and shared responsibilities, including the co-ordination and alignment of regional strategies.

Concordat partners:- West Midlands Regional Assembly, Advantage West Midlands, Government Office for the West Midlands, West Midlands Local Government Association, Regional Action West Midlands, West Midlands Business Council, Culture West Midlands, West Midlands Higher Education Association, West Midlands Learning and Skills Councils, Sustainability West Midlands, West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum, West Midlands Regional Observatory, West Midlands in Europe and Regen WM.

Concordat partners are working on the third Concordat, the current draft is attached. It is proposed that the draft is shared with the Full Assembly on 5 April for comments and endorsement of the broad approach being taken. Other Concordat partners will use March/April to share the draft with their respective Boards/constituencies. I am proposing that

the Assembly Board signs off the final Concordat at its meeting on 2 May and it is launched formally at the Assembly's AGM on 12 July.

2. Regional Economic Strategy Review

2.1. Purpose

To receive an update on the RES Review

2.2. Recommendation

To note the report.

2.3. Background

The time table and key phases of the RES Review were contained in the report to Full Assembly on 18 January which can be found on the Assembly website:

<http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=149>

In summary the time table and key phases are as follows:-

- 1 evidence gathering - to July
- 2 policy options - May - September
- 3 consultation on broad issues - Oct - March 2007
- 4 consultation on draft strategy - May - July
- 5 CSR 2007/final document - May - September

Key features of the RES Review include:- based on a robust evidence base, acknowledgment of changed/changing context, partners involvement, to cover the period to 2021, assessment of effectiveness of RES and its delivery mechanisms.

Mary Harpley from AWM will attend the Board meeting to provide further information and the perspectives from the AWM Board which met on 28 February. Assembly and AWM officers are working to ensure that the RES Review and the RSS Revision phases 1 and 2 are mutually supportive. However the Board should note that the time-tables do not run entirely in tandem. This has already presented a problem in respect to the timing of how the RSS Revision accommodates any spatial changes to the RES eg Regeneration Zones boundaries. Assembly and AWM will work together to mitigate the impact of this.

3. Regional Funding Allocations and Forward Planning Executive

3.1. Purpose

To provide an update on Regional Funding Allocations.

3.2. **Recommendation**

That the Board:-

1. Note the final submission on Regional Funding Allocations from Assembly and AWM to Government
2. Note Government's intention to have a dialogue with the regions in the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review and thereafter,
3. Request officers scope out the role, remit and membership of the Forward Planning Executive.

3.3. **Background**

Advice on Regional Funding Allocations from the Assembly and AWM with support from Government Office was submitted to Government by 31 January 2006. In a letter dated 22 February 2006 Government thanked the region for the Advice. The letter underlined Government's commitment to continue a dialogue with the regions in the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review and thereafter. It also confirmed that Ministers would be giving consideration to the transport priorities and will reach a decision "as soon as possible".

The final submission on Regional Funding Allocations can be found by following this link to the WMRA website:
<http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=157>

Our Advice concluded with the following statement:- "To give further confidence that the West Midlands is serious about forward planning, monitoring progress and sequencing investment, we intend to establish a Forward Planning Executive. This will comprise the chairs and vice chairs of the Assembly, the Transport Partnership, the new Housing Board and AWM; this will be supported by the chief executives and directors of the Assembly, AWM and Government Office".

Further work to scope out the role, remit and membership of the Forward Planning Executive for consideration by the Assembly and AWM Boards, will be undertaken now, but may need to be refined as the dialogue with Government progresses.

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WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL CONCORDAT 2006/draft version 3

Introduction

The West Midlands Regional Concordat is published and promoted jointly by the following regional organisations:

- West Midlands Regional Assembly
- Advantage West Midlands
- Government Office for the West Midlands
- West Midlands Local Government Association
- Regional Action West Midlands
- West Midlands Business Council
- Culture West Midlands
- West Midlands Higher Education Association
- West Midlands Learning and Skills Councils
- Sustainability West Midlands
- West Midlands Rural Affairs Forum
- West Midlands Regional Observatory
- West Midlands in Europe
- Regen WM

Purpose

This Concordat provides a framework for partnership working between regional organisations and for the integration of regional strategies. It is an agreement that reflects partners' respective roles and shared responsibilities, including the co-ordination and alignment of regional strategies.

The Concordat partners believe that through communicating effectively and working more closely together, we can more efficiently meet our common aims to the benefit of the people of the West Midlands region.

The Concordat in this its third version must remain relevant to the context within which the partners are working. This Concordat will be kept under review and shall be formally reviewed in July 2008. It can be found on partners' websites.

Other regions have developed an integrated strategy which draw together the key issues and challenges facing their regions. We believe our individual strategies articulate the issues we need to address in the West Midlands and provide a complementary set of policies to tackle the challenges. Instead we have chosen to take a different route. We have opted to adopt this Concordat because it:-

- ❖ Is a clear and strong statement to our partners locally, sub-regionally, regionally, nationally and internationally that as partners

we are committed to working together on matters of regional strategic importance.

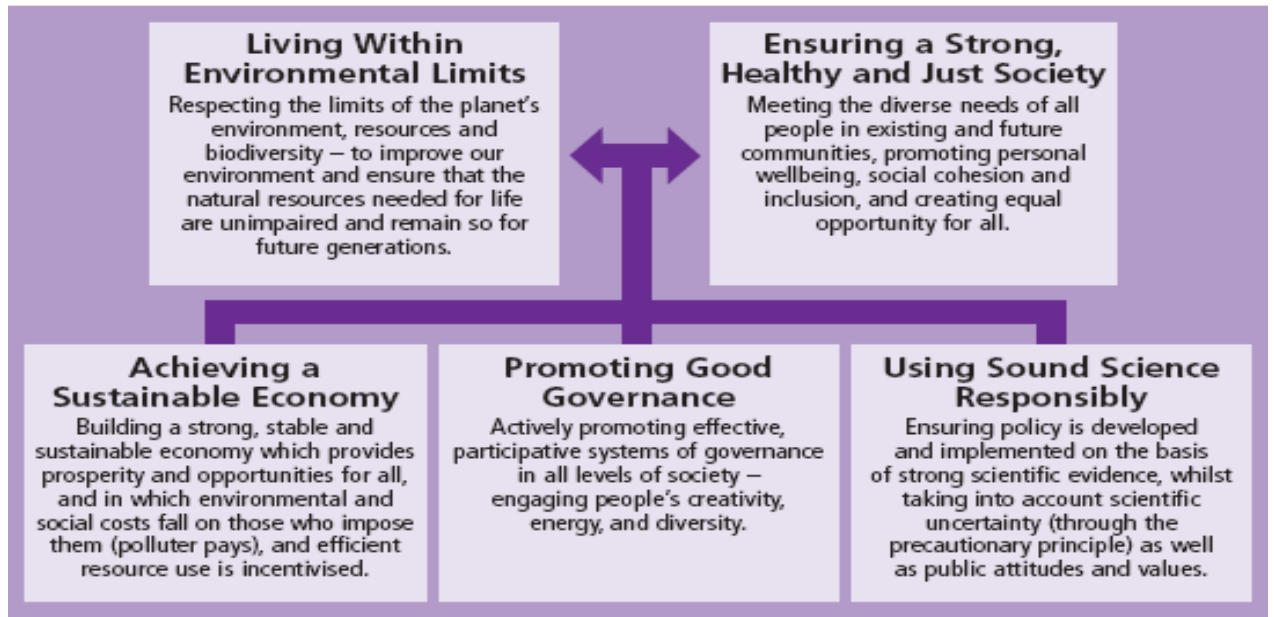
- ❖ Reflects the real world of constant change and challenge and gives the partners the flexibility to respond swiftly.
- ❖ Provides clarity about the high level aspirations and strategic priorities of the West Midlands.
- ❖ Commits partners to being open, co-ordinated, consultative and pro-active in our approach to securing our collective aspirations and strategic priorities.
- ❖ Identifies the partners and partnerships which are responsible and accountable for regional strategies, policy development and delivery.

Our Collective Commitment to the West Midlands

We share an overarching commitment to sustainable development and reducing inequalities in the region. This means creating a better quality of life for all, now and in the future, and tackling environmental, economic, health and social issues in an integrated way to find co-ordinated solutions. By working together we aspire to create -

'An economically successful, outward looking, healthy 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 of future generations'

The West Midlands Regional Sustainable Development Framework underpins this collective commitment. The RSDF expresses regional sustainable development objectives intended to maximise quality of life and well-being for all in the region by developing thriving sustainable communities, enhancing and protecting the environment, ensuring prudent and efficient use of natural resources, and developing a flourishing and diverse regional economy. The Framework outlines a process for the integration of these objectives into all regional policies and strategies.



Do we want this diagram or is the text sufficient?

All our regional strategies underline our commitment to our sustainable development objectives set out in the RSDf. We also undertake that as each strategy is reviewed we will look to strengthen that commitment. In annex X we have listed our Regional Strategies. From these strategies we have distilled the following strategic priorities, which provide the context to this Concordat:-

- **Urban Renaissance** - developing the MUAs in such a way that they can increasingly meet their own economic and social needs in order to counter the unsustainable outward movement of people and jobs facilitated by previous strategies;
- **Rural Renaissance**- addressing more effectively the major changes which are challenging the traditional roles of rural areas and the countryside;
- **Modernising and diversifying the economy and creating a dynamic business base** - ensuring that opportunities for growth are linked to meeting needs and that they help reduce social exclusion;
- **Upskilling the Region's workforce** - developing a highly qualified and appropriately skilled workforce driven by informed employer demand, responsive training providers and eager learners.
- **Promoting the Region's competitiveness and assets in a global setting** – communicating the region's strengths, opportunities and needs with confidence and coherence.
- **Securing and developing the Region's environment** - as an asset supporting wider economic and social aspirations and acting as a key component in regeneration.

Comment – the sixth strategic priority was not part of our RFA submission which focussed only on economic, transport and housing.

CONCORDAT 2006 - ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN THE WEST MIDLANDS REGION

The Concordat partner organisations have identified a shared set of values:-

Shared Values:

- Working together to **enhance and add value** to the work of regional organisations
- Promoting and **supporting diversity** in regional working
- Working **inclusively** with a wide range of economic, social, health and environmental partners **locally** and **sub-regionally**
- Working in a way that is **open and transparent** both to partners and to the public
- **Speaking up** for the West Midlands at every level
- Ensuring both political and civic **leadership** at regional level
- Promoting **good governance** within regional partnership working.
- Seeking to influence **European and National policy framework** within which we work
- Promoting a **reduction in inequalities** within the region.

Our New Commitment to Improving Partnership Working

- **The Importance of Co-operation**

We share a desire to improve the lives of people in the West Midlands and recognise the importance of working together on equal terms to achieve this goal. Regional working is characterised by organisations with different accountabilities either as national agencies accountable to government, local government accountable to local electorates or regional organisations accountable to members or Boards. Nevertheless all partners are committed to working co-operatively towards our strategic priorities.

- **Delivering Agreed Strategies and Plans**

As Concordat partners we are committed to working together to develop and deliver strategies and plans. This commitment also includes working with sub regional and local partnerships, to ensure synergy between a top down and bottom up approach to strategy development and delivery. The Concordat partners support the key role of local and sub-regional partnerships – whether geographically or theme focussed, to deliver the regional strategic priorities. Through statutory process or regional determination we have created a series of strategies and action plans to drive forward regional work. We will continue to work

hard to ensure that our strategies are aligned, coherent and mutually supportive to the benefit of the region.

- **Dynamic Partnerships for Delivery**

The partners are committed to creating and supporting governance arrangements which are effective and transparent and can demonstrate the prudent use of public funds against the outcomes we seek to achieve. In 2006 the region provided advice to Government on our funding priorities for economic development, housing and transport. Our advice demonstrates to Government that we are serious about breaking out of existing 'silo' funding arrangements and thinking. Our strategic priorities and our commitment to strong partnership arrangements underline and are critical to securing a more sophisticated and transparent approach to planning and sequencing of public and private investment in the West Midlands. We will keep our regional working arrangements under review, including the need to explore the option to establish a Forward Planning Executive to develop the ambitions set out in the WM Advice on Regional Funding Allocations (submitted in January 2006 weblink).

- **Working with National, European Sub-Regional, and Local Decision Makers.**

By working together at the regional level we expect to make more impact and be more successful in meeting the region's needs. The regional partners recognise the importance of the role of European national, sub-regional, and local governance in the life of the region and are committed to being a good partner at all these levels. We intend to make use of the strengths and role at each level but we will be strong in advocating the needs of the region and will highlight those issues policies and programmes that we think are working well for the West Midlands as well as those that are not.

- **Strategic Leadership**

As part of the Concordat process partners will undertake further work to find ways to better support leadership roles.

Successful regions have effective leadership. In a region with diverse accountabilities we recognise that leadership is shared and who or which organisation steps up to the mark will reflect the time, place, issue and audience. This is not an easy concept to facilitate, but the partners are committed to bringing greater clarity to where leadership comes from and ensuring that leaders and ambassadors are supported in their roles. The high level of trust that now exists amongst regional partners bodes well for the future. Good progress was made as the region developed its advice to Government on WM Regional Funding Allocations (submitted in January 2006 weblink).

- **Addressing Inequalities**

All Partners recognise that addressing inequality and social exclusion at all levels of society will provide clear economic, health and social benefits to individuals, private, public and voluntary sectors. We will place emphasis on building upon the experience of organisations within the region by fostering networks which

already play a critical role in raising awareness, promoting compliance and good practice on equality and human rights. To give greater prominence to this issue we will support the Equalities and Diversity/Social Inclusion Partnership under the umbrella of the Assembly.

- **Better Intelligence - Better Decision Making**
Partners are committed to supporting and funding the development of better intelligence as the focal point for regional intelligence gathering, monitoring and analysis.

The development of regional structures has prompted the need for better regional intelligence to inform decision making and monitor progress against agreed strategies and plans. The WM Regional Observatory has a key role to play, working in partnership with organisations who have their own monitoring system in place to assess the impact of the regional strategies. We must strive for an intelligence base which enables us to improve our decision making and ensures the WM is making its case on the basis of the best information and analysis we can achieve.

- **Planning for a Diverse Region**
As we plan for the future the partners commit to embracing the increasing diversity of the West Midlands in the development, review and monitoring of strategies and delivery plans. The West Midlands is the second most culturally diverse region in the UK and diversity represents both an opportunity and a challenge to this region. The diversity and size of our black and minority ethnic communities is increasing. Through studies commissioned by Advantage WM and the Assembly's Equalities and Diversity Review it is clear that all organisations in the region will need to improve their planning, monitoring and delivery if we are to engage and support our increasingly diverse communities.

- **A forward looking region in Europe**
The Partners are committed to working together on the EU and international agenda through the framework of the European Strategic Framework and International Strategy. The progress of regional working on European and international activity during the last two year has been impressive. Taking its lead from the EU's overarching 'Lisbon' policy for increasing competitiveness, jobs and growth within member states the partners are concentrating on a small number of key policy fields and strategic projects. Partners are committed to a structured approach to working with other EU regions and to maximise the region's access to EU funding, in particular research and development funding, innovation and lifelong learning, in addition to more traditional 'structural' funding'

- **Respecting Partner's Capacity and Accountabilities**
Each partner respects the role, agenda and constraints of each other. The strength of the Concordat lies in the ability of the partners to value the contribution that each can make to the region. Each partner commits to providing Concordat partners and others with the opportunity to be involved in the development and delivery of the strategies which they lead on. Therefore consultation processes and release of documentation will be issued in a timely fashion to enable co-operative

working between stakeholder partners. The Concordat partners are committed to making regional work as effective as possible and will seek to meet standards in the way we work as partners that at least equal those we are required to meet as individual organisations. The capacity and role of Concordat partners does not fully represent the range of Government policy or strategic issues which impact on the West Midlands – an example being the Government’s agenda for children, young people and family services. But the Concordat offers a style of working and the opportunity to focus on such policy and issues and to draw in other partners.

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Measuring Progress with the new Concordat

This Concordat sets out a framework for partnership working which we believe will facilitate the delivery our regional priorities. To assist us in measuring progress against the strategic priorities we have commissioned the West Midlands Regional Observatory to develop a contextual monitoring system designed to furnish a baseline and ultimately provide a consistently-based commentary on future Regional progress towards Urban and Rural Renaissance. The Observatory’s monitoring frameworks for the Economic Strategy and Skills Strategy and the Annual Monitoring Report on the Regional Spatial Strategy will also assist.

Annexes To The Concordat

Description of each signatory organisation and website

Description of each Partnership – Assembly’s and others.

The diagram of regional relationships.

List of strategies and websites.