

Agenda Item No. 8

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY Board of Directors - Friday 2nd June 2006

Policy Issues

Report of the Director of Policy (WMRA)

1. Regional Concordat

Purpose

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

Recommendation

- 1.2 To agree the draft WM Regional Concordat for publication and launch in July 2006.

Background

- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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. A recent addition to this list is the Strategic Health Authority, which following the recent changes in health service structures, will become a significant regional player.
- 1.5 Concordat partners have been working on the third Concordat, the current draft is **attached**. The draft was shared with the Full Assembly on 5 April and endorsement of the broad approach being taken secured. Concordat partners have used their recent Board meetings to consider and endorse the Concordat. I am proposing that the Assembly Board 'sign off' the final Concordat and it is launched formally at the Assembly's AGM on 12 July.

2. Regional Funding Allocations and Forward Planning Executive

Purpose

- 2.1 To provide an update on Regional Funding Allocations.

Recommendation

- 2.2 To note the update on Regional Funding Allocations and agree the establishment of the Forward Planning Executive.

Background

- 2.3 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".
- 2.4 In anticipation of encouragement from Government to pursue the approach set out in the advice; it is proposed to call the first meeting of the Forward Planning Executive on 12 July after the Annual General Meeting and City Region event.
- 2.5 This will be an opportunity to explore the issues, rather than a formal meeting. The RFA advice to Government set the membership as WMRA Chair and Chief Executive, AWM Chair and Chief Executive, GOWM Director, Chair of Transport Partnership and Chair of Regional Housing Executive.

3. WM Regional Spatial Strategy - Phase One

Purpose

- 3.1 To update the Board on the draft RSS Phase One Revision: The Black Country.

Recommendation

- 3.2 To note the report.

Background

- 3.3 On 26th April 2006, the Regional Planning Partnership approved the draft RSS Phase One Revision: the Black Country document together with other documents making up the submission to the Secretary of State. As agreed by RPP the Chairman and Vice Chairmen later approved minor editorial and technical changes. Although still being finalised, RPP also recognised the Black Country Study as support and technical substantiation for the Revision. This will shortly be completed and the Chairman and Vice Chairmen have delegated authority to agree to approve the finished document as supporting work. Following submission on 31st May, a period of consultation will follow from 1st June to 23 August with an Examination in Public of key issues in January 2007. The Assembly have asked for a presentation on the Black Country Study to a future meeting and the Board may also consider it appropriate for a presentation to be made to it.

4. WM Regional Spatial Strategy - Phase Two

Purpose

- 4.1 To update the Board on the RSS Phase Two Revision.

Recommendation

- 4.2 To note the report.

Background

- 4.3 The Section 4(4) Advice was returned on 16th May from the Strategic Authorities. This advice is currently being analysed and the results will be fed into the Options. Early indications are that the household projections recently published by the Government will present a considerable challenge for the Region. In view of this and other policy issues raised by the Section 4 (4) responses we intend to set up discussion meetings with the Strategic Authorities. It is considered important that the RSS revision is policy and not process driven. In light of this we may require a 10 – 12 week delay to the original timetable set out in the project plan.

5. City Regions**Purpose**

- 5.1 To provide a brief up date and seek support for an Assembly discussion on 12 July after the formal AGM on the City Regions Approach in the West Midlands.

Recommendation

- 5.2 To confirm arrangements for an Assembly discussion on the City Region approach in the West Midlands.

Background

- 5.3 At the Assembly's April meeting there was further discussion on the developments being taken by the 7 Met Authorities plus Telford and Stoke-on-Trent to develop City Regions. The Assembly confirmed its support for a revised statement of support and requested an opportunity for further discussion as the two approaches were developed.
- 5.4 Since that meeting the local elections have taken place and there has been a Cabinet reshuffle. Both events have had a bearing to a greater of lesser degree on how the two City Region approaches have developed. In addition the 'Metropolitan' City Region has appointed a Project Director and the Shire Counties have appointed an equivalent post, both are based at the Partnership Centre.

Detail

- 5.5 It has proved impossible to find a date for an Assembly discussion on the City Region approach before 12 July. Therefore the proposal is to hold a discussion after the Assembly's AGM on 12 July at Birmingham University. An officer group has been established to plan the discussion. The object being to:- enhance levels of understanding of both approaches, ensure that the City Region approaches are delivering against the regional agenda, explore governance arrangements with the Assembly and ensure that future development of both approaches

benefit the Region as a whole. The Board is invited to advise on this proposition.

6. A Sustainable Region – Contributions of the Assembly's Partnerships

Purpose

- 6.1 To advise the Board on progress with establishing a process for reporting by Regional Partnerships to the Assembly AGM on their contribution to sustainable development.

Recommendation

- 6.2 That the report is noted.

Background

- 6.3 At their last meeting the Board approved the proposed process for Partnership reporting to the Assembly AGM on their contribution to sustainable development. Following this, the Assembly Partnership Chairs have been formally invited to submit a response and relevant support officers have been briefed. Non-Assembly partnerships (Culture West Midlands, the Rural Affairs Forum, and the Regional Skills Partnership) and Concordat partners have also been invited to submit a response and have been provided with the reporting template based on the RSDF objectives. Sustainability West Midlands has agreed to provide an analysis of the reports which will be presented at the Assembly AGM by Bernard Doyle, SWM's Chair. Work on the reports is ongoing and several Partnerships have submitted completed reports.

7. "Securing the Regions' Futures; Strengthening delivery of sustainable development in the English regions" (DTI/ODPM/DEFRA April 2006)

Purpose

- 7.1 To advise the Board on the Government's plans to strengthen regional delivery of sustainable development.

Recommendation

- 7.2 That the report and its implications for regional organisations are noted.

Background

- 7.3 The Government has recently published *Securing the Regions' Futures*, which sets out how regional organisations will be expected to contribute to delivery of the UK Sustainable Development strategy. The key elements of *Securing the Region's Futures* are outlined below.
- 7.4 The Government will clarify the role of Regional Assemblies in determining high-level strategy arrangements; and invite regions to update their RSDFs/IRs in line with the UK SD Strategy and new guidance. Regions should report by the end of September 2006 on how their approach reflects the new guidance and refresh or update their regional document by December 2007.

- 7.5 The role of Government Offices will be strengthened by ensuring that sustainable development principles are embedded in business planning, workforce development and performance management systems. The role of Regional Development Agencies in delivering sustainable development will be strengthened by ensuring that Regional Economic Strategies are underpinned by strong sustainable development principles; and embedding the principle of sustainable development in RDA accountability frameworks.

Implications for the West Midlands

- 7.6 The new version of the West Midlands RSDF, due for launch in July, will respond to the new guidance, and the West Midlands will be well-placed to ensure its RSDF fully reflects all of the Government's recommendations by the deadline of December 2007. The forthcoming guidance on the role of Assemblies will be reviewed by the Secretariat to determine its implications for the West Midlands.
- 7.7 Sustainability West Midlands, the Regional sustainable development champion and the Assembly's independent advisory partnership on sustainable development, broadly fulfils the criteria for an effective roundtable and as part of its current review of its business model will be exploring how best to organise its structures to fulfil the roles set out in *Securing the Regions' Futures*.

8. Smart Growth – Midlands Way

Purpose

- 8.1 To advise the Board of recent and forthcoming matters in respect to Midlands Way.

Recommendation

- 8.2 To note.

Background

- 8.3 There was little activity during 2005 on Smart Growth – Midlands Way. However there was activity on other fronts such as City Regions, Northern Way and Science Cities this together with encouragement from ODPM to refocus Smart Growth – Midlands, has led to a rekindling of interest. The two RDAs on behalf of partners have commissioned consultants to move Midlands Way forward the focus is now on:-

- Tackling Shared Productivity Challenges - Driving up rates of productivity is a key objective.
- Enhancing Connectivity - Further improvement of national and international connections and enhancing the international gateway role of the Midlands is a priority, as is facilitating better connectivity across the Midlands for the benefit of both regions and the UK economy as a whole.
- Promotion & Positioning - There are clearly reasons to collaborate on the promotion and positioning of the Midlands both nationally and internationally.

- Encouraging Sustainable Growth. Parts of the East and West Midlands face a series of common challenges and opportunities eg. housing growth and provision of employment land.

8.4 Existing collaboration has helped identify a series of three key principles that should help guide future joint working:

- First, activities should make a demonstrable contribution to closing the Midlands' GVA gap.
- Second, all proposed actions should have a clear rationale for a Midlands wide approach. The concept of added value is a pivotal criterion.
- Third, activities should not overlook the practicalities of making collaboration happen.

8.5 It is expected that consultation on a re-drafted Smart Growth – Midlands Way will take place over the Summer.

9. Regional Economic Strategy Review

Purpose

9.1 To receive an update on the RES Review.

Recommendation

9.2 To note the report.

Background

9.3 The time table and key phases of the RES Review have been discussed at Full Assembly on 18 January and 5 April 2006.

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

- evidence gathering - to July
- policy options – May - September
- consultation on broad issues – Oct – March 2007
- consultation on draft strategy – May – July
- CSR 2007/final document – May - September

9.5 WMRA/WMLGA and Regional Economic Development Officers Group members are currently involved in the five evidence base development Project Groups (Future Prospects of the Region's Economy, Factors Influencing the Relative Performance of the WM Economy, Economic Geography, Evaluation of the Impact of the WMES, Evaluation of the Three Key Delivery Mechanisms). These officers provide a conduit to ensure our issues and comments are included in the evidence base development.

9.6 Officers are in discussion with AWM regarding shaping the next phase of the review, policy option development. It will be important to ensure that partners are well engaged in this work and that there is a strong connection made to the RSS Partial Review options development process.

10. Independent Performance Assessment (IPA) for Regional Development Agencies

Purpose

- 10.1 To advise that Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) are now subject to a three yearly assessment led by the National Audit Office (NAO).

Recommendation

- 10.2 The Board are asked to note the position.

Background

- 10.3 The 2005 Budget announced that all RDAs would be subject to a three yearly assessment led by the NAO. This process is intended to "be part of a more transparent, efficient and less bureaucratic system resulting in a net reduction of the audit burden on the RDA's". The resulting external audit process is similar to Local Government Comprehensive Performance Assessment and consists of four stages:-

- Self-assessment prepared and published by the RDA
- An independent examination of the RDA by an NAO team including on site work including meetings with partners and stakeholders
- Publication of a final report and overall assessment score by NAO
- Preparation of a performance improvement plan by the RDA which is agreed with the NAO.

- 10.4 Advantage West Midlands' assessment is due to commence in September 2006 with a final report published in March 2007. The Agency is keen to work closely with the Assembly in preparing for and undergoing its assessment. At its meeting on 5 April 2006 the Assembly's Strategic Review Group agreed to work with Advantage West Midlands to explore the contribution that the Assembly can make both as a key stakeholder and via its scrutiny role. A further report detailing how the Assembly will be involved will be submitted to the Board's next meeting.

11. Regional Health Strategy

Purpose

- 11.1 The board members to agree the process for developing a Regional Health Strategy which is in the Regional Assembly's business plan and fits with the Assembly's objectives of joining up regional strategies.

Recommendation

- (i) That a Regional Strategy for Health is developed under the auspices of the Regional Assembly.
- (ii) That the Regional Health Partnership forms the executive body for the Regional Health Strategy and the Regional Health Officer Group forms a steering group for strategy development.
- (iii) That the Regional Assembly networks and Partnerships assist with the development of the strategy with respect to the scoping work and consultation process.

- (iv) That a Local Authority Chief Executive is nominated to be a Local Authority lead representative with respect to the development of the Regional Health Strategy.

Background

- 11.3 The Health Strategy would be about working with regional partners to address inequalities in health, ensure health issues are promoted, improve the quality of life of all citizens and ensure NHS Investment contributes to economic, social and physical regeneration. The strategy would therefore be about the wider issues contributing to peoples health and not just NHS service delivery.
- 11.4 The 'Choosing Health for the West Midlands' report (<http://www.gowm.gov.uk/gowm/PublicHealth>) published in March 2006 outlines some of the key health inequalities in the West Midlands Region and it is anticipated that this will form a key evidence base, as well as the emerging priorities from the Local Area Agreements, information from the Regional Lifestyle survey and the State of the Region Reports.
- 11.5 Scoping work with some of the key regional partners will form the basis of an issues paper which will be taken to the Regional Health Partnership meeting on the 6th July. It is anticipated the strategy development will be from July-October 2006, with formal consultation from November 2006. The launch of the strategy is planned for early 2007.

12. Regional Strategic Partnership for Equality and Diversity

Purpose

- 12.1 To advise the Board of the work being undertaken by the Equalities and Diversity Partnership.

Recommendation

- 12.2 To note the progress to date.

Background

- 12.3 On 28th April, the Partnership hosted an event with the Women & Equality Unit of the DTI, to consult with stakeholders from across the region on the regional presence of the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights, which is due to be set-up in 2007. A paper outlining the most suitable options for the Commission in the region will be provided to Assembly Board members separately for approval (and/or amendment) before submission to the Women & Equality Unit [by 5th June], who will then submit a final recommendation paper to the Commission Board for its decision.
- 12.4 On 11th May, the Partnership hosted a second consultation event again with the Women & Equality Unit of the DTI (now in the Department of Communities and Local Government). This event was based on the *Getting Equal: Proposals to Outlaw Sexual Orientation Discrimination in the Provision of Goods & Services* consultation paper. The Partnership will collate views from those present and submit these to the Women & Equality Unit [by 5th June].

- 12.5 The Partnership has also worked closely with the Cabinet Office in arranging a consultation event on 1st June on *The Equalities Review: Interim Report for Consultation* and ensured that as many key stakeholders as possible from across the region have been invited. Roger McKenzie, Assembly Board member and member of the Partnership has agreed to speak and be a panel member at this event. If appropriate, the Partnership will submit written comments to the Cabinet Office [by 5th June].
- 12.6 At the end of April, a trans-national project proposal, in which the Assembly is a partner, was submitted to the European Commission's Gender Equality Fund, with agreement of the Chairman of the Assembly. The project aims to raise awareness and understanding in order to encourage women and other groups which are less well represented, to participate in local politics.
- 12.7 The next formal meeting of the Partnership is set for July, in Shrewsbury.

13. 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Update

Purpose

- 13.1 To update the Board on latest developments around the 2012 Games and WM activity and alert members to current key regional issues.

Recommendation

- 13.2 To note the implications of the regional issues set out below and consider how Assembly members might contribute to work on these in the short-to-medium term.

Background

- 13.3 Having worked together to promote and support London's bid for the 2012 games, a wide range of organisations from across the West Midlands Region have now come together to ensure that the region not only plays its part in delivering a successful event for the UK but also to deliver benefit from the games for the people and the economy of the region.
- 13.4 The lead body seeking to maximise benefits for the West Midlands is the West Midlands Leadership Group for the 2012 Games. The Group chaired by Cllr Chris Saint comprises a mix of public and private sector organisations and sub-regional representatives and a number of sub-groups report to it.
- 13.5 Cllr. Saint is also the region's representative on the Nations and Regions Group (NRG) which has been established by the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG) to support Nations and the English Regions to maximise benefits from the Games for the whole of the UK.

13.6 Key Regional Issues

Regional Co-ordinator funding – Sport England is expected to confirm funding of £200,000 towards regional coordination for 2012. The Leadership Group is seeking to match this with a minimum of £100,000

in cash and £100,000 in kind over the next 3 years. This will fund a full-time coordinator and a small operating budget over this period. Contributions have been requested from all sub regional partnerships and regional organisations involved in 2012 working but the full match funding requirement for the year 2006/2007 has yet to be secured. NB most regions have appointed a dedicated regional co-ordinator. The necessary match funding requirement per sub-regional partnership will amount to a modest contribution per annum in the region of £5,000 per annum.

Sub-regional working – In order to ensure a cohesive and comprehensive regional offer for 2012, co-ordinated sub-regional working (using County Sports Partnership areas as the basis for sub-regions) is clearly vital. Not all sub-regional partnerships have yet agreed how they will work or report into the Leadership Group.

Ultimately the region will only fully exploit potential benefits from the 2012 Games if it actively seeks out opportunities and partners work together to develop and present the very best of the region.

14. Network Rail Board Membership

Purpose

- 14.1 To advise the Board of the position regarding Network Rail Board membership.

Recommendation

- 14.2 To consider the current position.

Background

- 14.3 The Assembly currently has 'Public Member – Organisation' membership status, on the national Network Rail Board, our representative is Phil Davis (the rail passenger representative on the Regional Transport Partnership). This membership status will cease on 25th November 2006.
- 14.4 Over the last few months the Regional Transport Partnership has enjoyed an improving relationship with Network Rail, in the Region, and we value the Board membership status.
- 14.5 In the future Network Rail will accept applications to become Board Members, from individuals. Such an individual could act on behalf of organisations like ours, but applications had to be made by the 31st May 2006.
- 14.6 We have written to Network Rail expressing our disappointment with the present situation and seeking their views on how it may be addressed."

Rose Poulter
Director of Policy
West Midlands Regional Assembly
Tel: 0121 678 1031
e-mail: r.poulter@wmra.gov.uk

Appendix

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL CONCORDAT 2006/draft version 5

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
- **Strategic Health Authority**

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 demonstrates to adjoining regions and Government that the West Midlands can speak with one voice and is committed to delivering a national agenda in the 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.

We believe our individual strategies articulate the issues we need to address in the West Midlands and provide an integrated and complementary set of policies to tackle the challenges. 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.

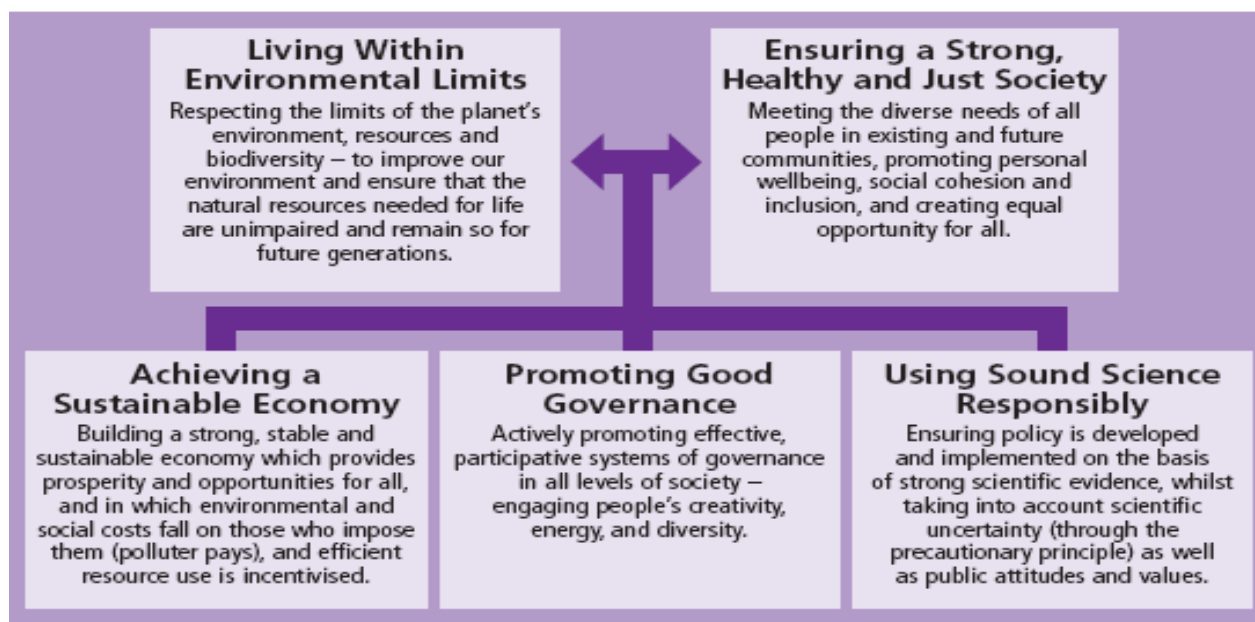
- ❖ Reflects the real world of constant change and challenge and gives the partners the flexibility to respond swiftly.
- ❖ Provides clarity about the high level aspirations and strategic priorities of the West Midlands.
- ❖ Commits partners to being open, co-ordinated, consultative and pro-active in 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 and the UK

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.



The above diagram is taken from the National Sustainable Development Plan and provides the context for our regional work and the Regional Sustainable Development Framework (RSDF).

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.

Climate change is one of the most severe problems we are facing today. No one person, organisation or community of interest can shape and deliver commitments to climate change alone. The Region will accommodate potential impacts of climate change in our long-term planning and review of strategies to help address and adapt to its consequences as part of our plans for a more sustainable future.

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 Major Urban Areas 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 our quality of life, 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, private and voluntary and community sector 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.

- **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 and community 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 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 systems in place, such as the Assembly and the WM Public Health Observatory, 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. As a Region our population is aging, but in our Major Urban Areas we have a growing population of under 25's. 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. But the Concordat offers a style of working and the opportunity to focus on such policy and issues and to draw in other partners.

Measuring Progress with the new Concordat

This Concordat sets out a framework for partnership working which we believe will facilitate the delivery of our regional strategic priorities. As part of the formal review process for the Concordat partners will be asked to identify the steps they have taken to secure effective partnership working. To assist us in measuring progress against the strategic priorities and demonstrate the added value that the Concordat gives the West Midlands 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, Skills Strategy and State of the Region Report will provide useful sources of information. The Annual Monitoring Report on the Regional Spatial Strategy will also assist, as will the Health of the Region Report from the West Midlands Public Health Observatory.

Putting the Concordat into Practice

This Concordat makes a series of strong statements about our **collective commitments** and **shared values** for partnership working. To put these into practise each Concordat partner will ensure that Concordat partners when reviewing or updating their strategies or plans provide the opportunity for Concordat partners to participate in a facilitated discussion – the purpose being to secure an integrated input unconstrained by policy silos. We will also provide a web link to the Concordat on their website. In addition each partner will provide an annual report to the Assembly setting out the contribution each as made to sustainable development in the Region.

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.