

**DRAFT DECISION NOTES OF THE WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL
ASSEMBLY ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON 18 JULY 2007
AT AUSTIN COURT, BIRMINGHAM**

Chairman: Cllr David S Smith (Lichfield DC)

1. Apologies and Attendance

The apologies and attendances are attached as Appendix 1.

2. Members' Disclosures of Interest

There were no disclosures of interest stated.

The Chairman opened the meeting by paying tribute to Councillor Ken Hardeman who had passed away. Cllr John Lines (Birmingham CC) spoke of how Cllr Hardeman (a Councillor for over forty years) had worked tirelessly for local government particularly in the area of regeneration. A letter of condolence would be sent to the family of Cllr Hardeman.

3. Chairman's and Vice-Chairs' Reports

Cllr David S Smith (Chairman) :

- Referred to the newly published government document Sub National Review (SNR). The Regional Assembly and its partners had a significant track record in working for the region and had delivered both effectively and efficiently across a wide range of work areas.
- He confirmed the RSS had faced difficult decisions to be made and which would affect people for the next 20 years. The Assembly still had a responsibility until 2010 and he stated that the Assembly should complete any work that it could and hand this over confidently.

Roger McKenzie (Acting Vice Chair - OSG)

- Paid tribute to Valerie Broom who was to stand down as Vice Chair of the Assembly.
- He was confident that partnership working across the region would continue as there was a valuable role for all partners to play across the region.

Sarindar Singh Sahota (Vice Chair – Business Council)

- Echoed views of the Chairman and Vice Chair. There had been added value in partnership working and had brought together expertise across the region. The region could only prosper if partnerships continued to work together.
- He gave thanks to Fraser Mitchell a WMBC Member who had stood down from the WMRA and wished him well in his retirement.

Cllr Terry Dix (Vice Chair - LA)

- Agreed with all comments made from the Chairman and Vice Chairs. Highlighted that the West Midlands was the lead in partnership working.

4. Election of Chairman 2007/08

The Assembly **elected** Cllr David S Smith as Chairman of the West Midlands Regional Assembly for 2007/08.

5. Election of Vice Chairs' 2007/08

The Assembly **elected** the following Vice-Chairs of the West Midlands Regional Assembly for 2007/08:

Cllr Terry Dix (Staffordshire CC) - Local Government

Roger McKenzie - Other Stakeholders Group

Dr Sarindar Singh Sahota - Business Sector

6. Draft decision notes of the Full Assembly Meeting held on 25 April 2007 and Matters Arising

The draft notes were **AGREED** as a true record.

Matters Arising

Item 5 – Corporate Governance Arrangements

West Midlands Business Council requested that Assembly

Members be notified in writing when the accounts had been submitted to Company's House.

7. Assembly Board of Directors

The Assembly **agreed** the membership of the Board of Directors for 2007/08 in accordance with the amended constitution; all to be full Members of the Assembly: -

Cllr David S Smith (Lichfield) - Chairman

Cllr Terry Dix (Staffordshire CC) - Local Government Vice Chair

Roger McKenzie - Other Stakeholders Group Vice Chair

Dr Sarindar Singh Sahota - Business Sector Vice Chair

Local Government Sector (12)

Keith Austin (Labour, Telford and Wrekin)

Robert Simpson (Labour, Staffordshire)

Serena Croad (Conservative, Malvern Hills)

Sir Albert Bore (Labour, Birmingham)

Steve Eling (Labour, Sandwell)

Jo Jones (Conservative, Shrewsbury and Atcham)

John Lines (Conservative, Birmingham)

Roger Phillips (Conservative, Herefordshire)

Rex Roberts (Conservative, Staffordshire)

Chris Saint (Conservative, Stratford-on-Avon)

Andy Matchet (Conservative, Coventry)

Heather Kidd (Regional Housing Partnership – Vice-Chair)

Business Sector (3)

Vacancy

Brian Summers

Roger Stone

Other Stakeholders Sector (3)

Vacancy

Roger McKenzie

Cllr Elizabeth Newman

8. West Midlands Regional Assembly Membership 2007/08

The Assembly was presented with the current Assembly Member structure and endorsement was sought to the arrangements to approve outstanding membership issues.

The Assembly:

- (a) **Noted** the current membership structure of the Assembly as set out in the appendices to the report.
- (b) **Endorsed** the Board decision that in the spirit of openness and transparency members of all three sectors and across the Assembly's governance structures should be encouraged to make available for publication on the Assembly's website Members' contact e.mail addresses.
- (c) **Requested** that the Assembly's nominating bodies finalise their nominations to the various groups at the earliest opportunity.
- (d) **Endorsed** the current lead member arrangements, and delegate authority to the Chairman and Vice-Chairs of the Assembly to approve outstanding nominations, for officers for 2007/8 as outlined in the report.

9. CORPORATE ISSUES

9.1 2007-10 Business Plan and Budget

Members received an update report on the 2007-10 Business Plan and budget.

The Assembly **noted** the detail of the report.

9.2 Strategic Plan for 2007-08

Members received a report that signposted them to the 2006-07 Final Progress Report which was submitted to Government Office in April and duly reviewed and approved.

The Assembly **noted** the details of the report which was available on the WMRA website.

9.3 IRP for Members Allowances Scheme

The Assembly was provided with an update on the work of the Independent Remuneration Panel which was considering the development of an Assembly scheme of allowances and expenses.

The Assembly Finance and Audit Committee was due to meet during July and a full report would be considered at the Board meeting in September.

The Assembly

- (a) **noted** the detail of the report.
- (b) **noted** that a full report would be made to the Assembly Board in September.

9.4 Regional Partnership Centre Priorities and Values

The Assembly were informed on the establishment of a single set of Priorities and Values for the Regional Partnership.

The Assembly **endorsed** and **agreed**;

- (a) The Priorities for the Regional Partnerships for the period 2007 to 2010 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- (b) A Statement of Values for the Regional Partnerships attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

10. Report of the Finance and Audit Committee

The Assembly was presented with the Financial Statements for 2006-07 and were notified of the re-appointment of Clement Keys for 2007-08.

The Assembly **noted** the Financial Statements 2006-07 and the re-appointment of Clement Keys.

POLICY ISSUES

11. Sub National Review and Governance of Britain

This item was deferred for consideration at the end of the agenda.

12. Climate Change Action Plan

The Assembly received a report, which sought the endorsement of the Regional Assembly to the consultation draft Climate Change Action Plan for the Region, and the arrangements for the consultation and finalisation of the Climate Change Action Plan.

The Assembly:

- a) **Endorsed** the consultation draft of the Climate Change Action Plan;
- b) **Noted** and **endorsed** further development regarding proposed arrangements for governance and accountability

for Regional Climate Change working;

- c) **Supported** the proposed arrangements for consultation and finalisation of the plan
- d) **Requested** its own member organisations to contribute to the development and delivery of the action plan

Members were advised that the Climate Change Consultation document would be considered at their meeting in October.

13. Scrutiny Review of Advantage West Midlands: Access to Finance

The Assembly was presented with the recommendations arising from this scrutiny review. Roger Trotman, the Review Panel Chairman introduced the item and gave special thanks to Daryl Davies for supporting the review process.

The Assembly discussed and **endorsed** the recommendations of the scrutiny review report.

In discussion, concern was raised that there was a short time space regarding the scrutiny of Business Links which was due to begin in May 2008. Members were advised that this review was important for the business community and would be beneficial to commence the review within those timescales.

14a. WMRA Response to the WMES Consultation

Members received a report that outlined the Assembly's response to the draft West Midlands Economic Strategy (WMES).

In discussion the following comments were made:

- Disappointment was expressed from the Business Sector that business was not recognised appropriately in the WMES.
- There was no mention of cross border interaction from the West Midlands and other regions, particularly regarding transport links. North Staffordshire had five regeneration projects and no reference was made to East Staffordshire/Derbyshire or the large sums of funding needed.
- Telford had no direct rail links with London, which should be referred to in the WMES.
- The RES did not provide sufficient importance to the

significance of the sub-regions.

Members **agreed** the WMRA response subject to the above comments being included.

14b. Progress Report 2006-07

The Assembly received an update on progress in delivering the actions set out in the WMES Action Plan 2004 – 2010 from John Edwards of Advantage West Midlands.

The Assembly **noted** and **endorsed** the content of the report, however, it was noted that the report was yet to be considered by the Advantage West Midlands Board and would be discussed at their meeting on 31st July.

15. Councillors Commission

The Assembly received a report that informed them about the Councillor Commission consultation.

Members **endorsed** the draft response to the Councillor Commission (appendix 1 to the report), and **agreed** that the response should additionally consider the needs for Councillors (or prospective Councillor) with families.

Members were advised that further comments should be made to the Chief Executive on 0121 678 1031 or by email at o.dutton@wmra.gov.uk

FOR INFORMATION

16. Regional Policy Partnership Activity

It was requested that page 13 to the report be amended to read; "Brian Woods Scawen as the Chair of the Cultural Partnership and not Chris Saint as stated."

The Assembly **noted** the content of the report.

17. Regional Spatial Strategy – Update on Progress

The Assembly were provided with an update on the progress of Phases One and Three of the revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).

Gerald Kells (OSG) registered his concerns regarding the timing of the Preferred Option and whether the RPP had sufficient time to consider all of the issues before signing off the Preferred Option.

The Assembly **noted** the report.

- 18. Strong and Prosperous Communities
The Local Government White Paper Briefing Note 2007**
The Assembly **noted** the briefing note

- 19. Draft Decision Notes of the Assembly Management Board held on 8 June 2007**

Members **noted** the decision notes.

- 20. Rural Affairs Forum Annual Report**

Members **noted** the content of the Annual Report.

- 21. Dates of Future Meetings**
24 October 2007 – Wolverhampton Science Park
16 January 2008
23 April 2008
9 July 2008 - Annual Meeting

- 11. Review of Sub National Economic Development and Regeneration**

The Assembly received a report on the Sub National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration published the previous afternoon which had been trailed as having a substantial input into the Comprehensive Spending Review and, in particular, as being likely to have the most impact on the governance arrangements at the sub national level. Its Terms of Reference looked at some of the “unfinished business” left over from the growth around the regional agenda over the last decade or so and identified options for going forward which would maximize value for money and deliver changes to strengthen economic growth and deliver regeneration and neighbourhood renewal.

Headlines from the review included a strengthening of the role for local authorities in economic development and neighbourhood renewal with greater devolution to this level, a

more strategic approach at the regional level and a stronger performance framework for the RDA'S who would take over the roles of the assembly in relation to planning and transport, with Regional Assemblies in their current role ceasing to exist from 2010.

It was recommended that the Assembly discuss the issues raised in the report and for the discussion to form a response to the report.

The following comments were made: -

- Concern was raised that the paper did not mention the business and other stakeholders and how they had worked in partnership. There was much to be proud of regarding the work undertaken over the last nine years and the ethos of partnership working should not be lost. There was still the need to work together in responding to the RDA.
- Business input had been positive and a mutual respect between partners had been built.
- Local authority members valued the experience and expertise from Business and Other Stakeholders.
- It needed to be highlighted that one size does not fit all. The enthusiasm of partnership working needed to be kept and carried through to any new arrangements.
- The role of transport was one of the most critical issues to the region and this must be recognised. It was felt that transport issues were already underserved by Government.
- The Regional Assembly had been through many transformations since its formation, members had respect for each other, were a regional voice and had been way ahead of other Assemblies. There was a need to ensure that partnership working continued whatever happened.
- This must be seen as an opportunity to work together.
- Assembly were advised that the Chairman and Chief Executive had met with the Minister and had made it clear that the WMRA was not just local authorities it was a partnership.
- It was positive to have a West Midlands Minister and a West Midlands talk time.

The Assembly **agreed** the above comments be included in any response to the Sub National Review and in consideration of arrangements within the region following its publication.

**WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY ANNUAL MEETING
Held on 18 July 2007 at Austin Court, Birmingham**

Attendance:

Councillor David S Smith – Chairman, Lichfield DC

Local Authority Members:

S Ralphs (Staffordshire Moorlands), T Singh (Wolverhampton), S Croad (Malvern Hills), N Campbell (Rugby), A Bore (Birmingham), P Tilsley (Birmingham), J Mutton (Coventry), N Davies (Solihull), S Eling (Sandwell), A Ward (Sandwell), S Smith (Sandwell), P Bilson (Wolverhampton), T James (Herefordshire), K Austin (Telford & Wrekin), I Fletcher (Telford & Wrekin), T Dix (Staffordshire), R Roberts (Staffordshire), A Fox (East Staffordshire), S Tagg (Newcastle-under-Lyme), B Edwards (South Staffordshire), S Highfield (Stafford), J Oats (Tamworth), R Hyde (Warwickshire), M Jones (Warwickshire), C Saint (Stratford-on-Avon), J Hammon (Warwick), E Tucker (Worcestershire), S Geraghty (Worcester), P Middlebrough (Wychavon), P Atkins (Staffordshire), R Badham (Sandwell), R Hardwick (East Staffordshire) and M Heatley (Warwickshire).

Business Sector Members:

M Cherry, B Williams, G Minshull, C Newis, S Singh Sahota, R Stone, B Summers and R Trotman.

Other Stakeholder Group Members:

G Kells, Revd J Hall, P Davis, E Buggins, E Newman, C Welch, P Shirley, and P Fairclough

Apologies:

Local Authority Members:

M Whitby – Birmingham, P Phillips – Shropshire, L Gregory – Birmingham, N Roberts – Lichfield, K Taylor – Coventry, I Shires – Walsall, P Mansfield - Oswestry, R Hassall – Birmingham, D Sparks – Dudley, M Pate - Shropshire, J O'Hare – Walsall, B Sleight – Solihull, Hart – Wyre Forest, and Roger Phillips – Herefordshire

Business Sector Members:

K Farrell, N Cave, and Prof M Clarke

Other Stakeholder Group Members:

H Farrand and R Evans.