

## Agenda Item No. 5

### WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Board of Directors – 8<sup>th</sup> June 2007

#### Report of the Chief Executive and Company Secretary

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1. 2007-10 Business Plan & Budget – Update & Variations
2. 2006-07 Final Report
3. Membership Issues
4. Independent Remuneration Panel for Members Allowances Scheme
5. Audit

#### 1. 2007-10 Business Plan & Budget

##### 1.1 Purpose of Report

To update the Board on the 2007-10 Business Plan & Budget.

##### 1.2 Recommendation

That the Board **notes** the detail of this report and **approves** the proposed changes to the establishment and variations.

##### 1.3 Details

The Assembly's 2007-10 Business Plan & Budget was accepted by DCLG and the funding agreement letter received to confirm a total budget of £2,517,502.

- 1.4 DCLG also approved the request for a legal contingency of £18,705 and a general contingency which at the year end was £2,529. These funds are carried forward into 2007-08 and have been parked as a potential legal budget pending the outcome of the Coventry Airport Public Inquiry (CAPI).

##### Staffing Variation

- 1.5 Since drafting the Budget, there has emerged a need to revisit the staffing resource to address identified pressures around climate change and communication work strands. We are proposing two amendments to the establishment as follows.

- 1.6 The 2007-08 Regional Partnership Communication Plan is critical to ensuring we effectively communicate and demonstrate the value to the Region of the work of the Assembly. It is also the Communications Team who provides the essential resource to support our work on RSS in terms of consultation and communication/information publications. The team of two officers supports both the Assembly and WMLGA and is currently insufficient to deliver the work plan effectively. We are therefore proposing to add a **Press/PR Officer** post to the establishment. The cost of this post will be shared 50:50 with WMLGA. Head of Communications is also currently about to go on maternity leave and whilst she occupies the post on a part time arrangement (4pdw) we intend to provide maternity cover at a full time level.

- 1.7 We are making progress in establishing the Climate Change Partnership and within our establishment we have an officer who will be returning from a secondment to Wolverhampton early in order to support this growing work stream. The cost of this early return will be the equivalent of an extra policy officer post for 10 months of 2007-08. In addition, we believe that there is a need to establish some corporate support for this area and in particular to support the new partnership structure. This will equate to 2 days per week of a Regional Support Officer.
- 1.8 Finally, we have now reached an agreement with the University of Birmingham to fund a three year project for a PHD student to work for us to research effective engagement mechanisms with MPs and MEPs. The cost is £4,000 per annum.
- 1.9 The effect of these changes to the establishment is an additional £18,334 of staffing costs in 2007-08. However we are confident that this sum can be managed within the existing budget structure and supported if necessary by any bank interest earned in the year.

#### RSS Phase 2

- 1.10 We now need to revisit the Centres Study work previously undertaken by Roger Tym, to provide updated information for RSS Phase 2. An indication of cost for this work is in the region of £25,000 which we will have to meet from within the existing budget by virements. We need to begin this work shortly so we will look to identify expenditure that could be diverted to this, however if there is no costs awarded against us in respect of CAPI we would wish to utilise some of the establish legal contingency budget to meet this essential RSS cost.

## **2. 2006-07 Final Progress Report**

### **2.1 Purpose**

To advise the Board that the 2006-07 Final Progress Report has been submitted to Government Office and reviewed.

### **2.2 Recommendation**

The Board is asked to **note** the details of the report.

### **2.3 Details**

The Assembly provided the 2006-07 Final Progress Report to Government Office on 20 April 2007 and attached is Pages 1-14 containing the Exception Report (appendix 1). A full copy of the 54 page report is available on the website <http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=332> A review meeting has been held with Government Office; there are no significant issues or concerns to report.

## **3. Membership Issues**

### **3.1 Purpose**

To seek the Board's consideration and agreement on pertinent issues relating to membership of Assembly governance structures.

### 3.2 **Recommendations**

- (a) That the Board **endorses** Roger Evans' nomination as Vice Chair – Other Stakeholders of the Regional Planning Partnership as outlined in para 3.3.
- (b) That the Board **notes** the process of nominations to the Regional Assembly structures (para 3.3).
- (c) In the spirit of openness and transparency that the Board encourages members of all three sectors and across the Assembly's governance structures, to make available for publication on the Assembly's website Members' contact e.mail addresses (para 3.4).

### 3.3 Regional Planning Partnership Vice Chair (Other Stakeholders)

The Board is advised that the Other Stakeholder Group has formally nominated Roger Evans to the post of the Regional Planning Partnership Vice Chair, which is also a position on the Assembly Board.

### 3.4 WMRA Governance Structures 2007/08

The Board is advised that the WMRA Secretariat has written to the nominating bodies of the three sectoral interests seeking nominations to the 2007/08 governance structures.

### 3.5 Publication of E.mail Addresses

The Board is requested, in the spirit of openness and transparency to consider encouraging members of all three sectors and across the Assembly's governance structures, to make available for publication on the Assembly's website Members' contact e.mail addresses.

## 4. **IRP for Members Allowances Scheme**

### 4.1 **Purpose**

To provide an update for the Board on the work of the Independent Remuneration Panel who are considering the development of an Assembly scheme allowances and expenses.

### 4.2 **Recommendation**

The Board is asked to **note** the content of the report.

### 4.3 **Background**

An Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), Chaired by Dr Declan Hall (University of Birmingham) has been convened to consider the issues as outlined in the attached terms of reference (appendix 2) as previously agreed by the Board of Directors.

4.4 The IRP met twice in May and will meet again in June to formulate their recommendations. To assist with its considerations the Panel reviewed a wide range of information, including interviewing a range of Members and Officers across all sectoral interests. Additional interviews will be held directly following on from the Board of Directors meeting.

4.5 The Panel's report will be presented to the Finance and Audit Committee for consideration before further submission to the Board.

5. **Audit**

5.1 **Purpose**

To advise the Board of Audit work in progress and the timetable.

5.2 **Recommendation**

The Board is asked to **note** the content of the report.

### 5.3 **External Audit**

The external audit is currently in progress and we aim to present Financial Statements to the Finance and Audit Committee in June if possible. We would then like to provide the FAC report to the Board electronically shortly after, with a view to taking the Financial Statements to the full Assembly at the AGM. This would then enable us to provide a timely return to Companies House.

### 5.4 **Internal Audit**

The Regional Assembly does not have its own finance staff but the provision of financial management services is via the WMLGA.

The WMLGA Finance & Audit Committee (Resources Panel) is responsible for overseeing the internal audit provision and will consult directly with the Assembly's FAC.

WMLGA have received the Internal Auditor's Report which has given 'significant reassurance' for the audit work undertaken in 2006-07 and a report is currently being sent to the Assembly's FAC from the Chairman of the Resources Panel, Cllr David S Smith. This report will also seek the Assembly's view on the Draft Audit Plan for 2007-08 and any particular aspect of Assembly activity that may warrant audit attention.

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**Terms of Reference for the  
Reconvened (Joint WMLGA/WMRA)  
Independent Remuneration Panel**

To consider and make recommendations on: -

1. Whether or not WMRA should establish a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) Scheme to include senior positions in addition to the Chair (currently the only remunerated position in WMRA). The positions to be considered to include WMRA Vice-Chairs, Chairs of Regional Partnerships and Regional Planning Executive Conformity determination Members.
2. If so what levels of remuneration should apply to these SRAs.
3. The relationship between WMRA and WMLGA SRAs and particularly remuneration protocols that might apply where there are dual roles eg single Chairman of WMLGA and WMRA, WMLGA Portfolio Holders who also chair a WMRA Partnership.
4. A travel and subsistence scheme for WMRA with particular attention to non local government members of the Assembly.

Information which the IRP will need to consider will include: -

- Roles and responsibilities of WMRA office holders
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- WMLGA's Members Allowance and Travel and Subsistence Schemes
- Other Regional Assemblies' approaches to allowances
- Evidence and opinion from WMRA/WMLGA members and officers as appropriate