

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY PARTNERSHIP

NOTES OF BOARD MEETING - 22nd January 2009

INTRODUCTION

Nina Dawes, the Chief Executive of Lichfield District Council, opened the meeting and welcomed everybody to the Regional Partnership Centre.

1. MINUTES

The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed and accepted as a true record of the meeting.

- Keith Gordon gave an update of progress with the regional waste initiative following his presentation to the Board last October.
- Glyn Evans also gave an update regarding Procurement.

2. ECONOMIC RECESSION AND IT'S IMPLICATIONS

Andy Hancox introduced the report which set out the current issues regarding the economic climate and; the activities that WMRIEP was already playing; and the role that WMRIEP could potentially play. AH also highlighted the particular pressures that District Councils were facing at present.

The Board recognised that there was already a lot happening at a regional and national level to address this issue and were keen to ensure that any WMRIEP support should complement, not duplicate, existing networks/ activity. There was a strong recognition that WMRIEP did not necessarily have to develop a fundamentally new 'offer' in relation to supporting economic recovery; rather we should focus on those areas already identified; and also ensure that the existing WMRIEP work programmes are reviewed to reflect economic issues where appropriate.

Agreed

- WMRIEP should focus on those areas already identified for action and also stick to it's core offer and find practical ways to support LA's through it's existing work programme
- Any new monies should be used to complement existing activity, not divert away from the core focus

- The pressures on District Councils were recognised and the need to consider how to sharpen up existing support arrangements was endorsed.

3. UPDATES

Adult Social Care

Linda Sanders & Matt Bowsher gave an update of progress to date. There is a strong JIP in place, supported by a well developed DASS network. The programme is moving from strategy to delivery and the business plan is developing across 11 key strands. A key issue is the need to integrate the work of the JIP with the wider transformation agenda. A major efficiency event is planned shortly and there is a developing culture of trust and shared learning emerging positively across the region. A member network has also been established to help shape the work programme.

Steve Wellings asked about any available best practice/experience with regard to their pending Adult Safeguarding inspection. Sandra Hudson was identified as a key contact and Matt Bowsher will follow up and provide further details.

Children's Services

Mark Rogers provided an update and highlighted the many parallels with the Adult's agenda. Mark reported that Safeguarding is the key issue regionally and nationally. Within our region we have 1 authority that has been judged to be providing 'unsatisfactory' safeguarding measures and 6 which are judged to be 'satisfactory' - 50% of authorities in the region being a 1 or a 2. There is however dispute nationally over the way these assessments have been conducted.

The Children's Forum has identified 5 priorities (plus safeguarding activity) as its key focus and details of the delivery plan will be brought to the next meeting. There is a good regional DCS network in place to share best practice etc. that people can access.

It was acknowledged that WMRIEP are providing support to Birmingham and Glyn Evans expressed thanks on behalf of the authority.

Howard Davies highlighted that an IDeA Safeguarding Peer Review process is currently being trialled and will be available from April 2009.

Use of Resources

Phil Jones reported that CPA scores and Use of Resources scores will be published on 5.3.09 and are embargoed until then. Generally, the picture on 'financial systems and reporting' is broadly good news with at least 6 authorities improving across the region. Overall more authorities are

improving than declining on these measures. It is important to note that government drivers on efficiency will continue to influence future direction.

Devolution of Locality Improvement Advisers/Neighbourhood Resource Centres

David Galliers gave an update regarding WMRIEP management of the national LIA programme on behalf of the other RIEPs. There is a £3.6M LIA budget nationally and LAs and Partnerships can call upon this capacity to help support and deliver LAA targets. There is a long list of categories where specialist support is available.

In terms of Neighbourhood Resource Centres (NRC's), CLG have invited the RIEPs to work with NRC's to support neighbourhood working. A small amount of money has been made available to build capacity within NRC's and help them move to a more business like approach. A 'fit for purpose' business plan will be submitted to CLG in March.

Mark Pearce highlighted that it is vital for this work to link to the AWM programmes. Paul Shearn commended the work of the LLIA in Walsall.

Efficiency

Andy Hancox fed back to the Board the emerging proposals from CLG in respect of the £115M national efficiency pot. Essentially the fund will be targeted at 3 strands; Customer Driven Transformation, Efficiency and Prevention.

We have already submitted some outline proposals to CLG based on feedback from the Board before Christmas and would hopefully be able to respond quickly once the final criteria for the fund is announced. WMRIEP will identify key players representing the 3 strands and have further discussions. If Board members wish to be involved in this they should contact Andy Hancox.

Andy Hancox also highlighted that in terms of authorities' efficiency statements for 2008/9, the region is apparently at risk of failing to meet the overall target of 3% and there is considerable variability in individual LA projections (ranging from 1.5% cashable savings to 15%). This issue may feature in the CAA Use of Resources assessment in future and John Healey places great emphasis on these targets. It is important that the region is not unduly scrutinised and WMRIEP plans to work with LA treasurers to determine the robustness of the current returns and identify any areas of concern.

Transformation

Ged Bowles presented his paper giving a progress update on the Transformation workstream. Ged emphasised that the programme comprises a number of elements and that the focus is not simply on financial support. The key emphasis is on capacity building and building a sustainable skills base for the future, thereby reducing/avoiding expensive consultancy costs etc.

The Skills Development element of the programme provides a 50% subsidy on training, which is targeted at staff engaged in transformation projects. The team are also providing hands-on support to a number of authorities providing expert advice and support.

Ged also highlighted the development of the BPI/Lean contracts framework which is available to authorities and has had excellent take-up. To date 40 contracts have been accessed through the framework, saving around £500k in avoidance costs.

Indicative allocations have been agreed with authorities and the Fire Authority and project proposals are developing well. The emerging work with the Counties and Districts was discussed and it was recognised that these projects would continue to be firmed up over the next month or so.

Glyn Evans gave details of a transformation themed event in Birmingham on 4.3.09 which WMRIEP have been invited to attend.

4. RIEP PROGRESS REVIEW

Andy Hancox presented the report which gave an overview of WMRIEP progress since April '08. The report set out the headline achievements and the key issues to note. A significant issue is the submission of the Annual Performance Report to CLG in late February/March. Planning for 2009/10 is underway and the process of preparing the Annual Performance Report will lead to a refresh of the Strategy for 2009/10 and beyond.

It is important to note that Year 2 funding will only be released to RIEPS by CLG where proven evidence of existing and likely future success is demonstrated within our Annual Performance Report. In terms of workstream delivery WMRIEP is largely working on a September to September 'financial year', with funding therefore continuing until mid-2011 assuming we are successful in drawing this down from CLG in Years 2 and 3.

There was some discussion amongst the Board regarding the future role that WMRIEP could play in terms of driving improvement across the sector and managing help and support in a focussed and sensitive way. The London RIEP LA peer review model was recognised within the discussion as a potential approach to explore.

5. DELIVERY PLAN UPDATE/PROJECT APPROVALS

Andy Hancox presented the latest progress report in terms of budget and delivery plans and sought approval for a number of new projects. In terms of budget, the CSR04 budget is largely spent and there are no major changes to CSR07, although there are some new income streams to note.

Agreed

In terms of approvals, the following was agreed:

- c£100K for Stoke – detailed plans to be agreed with the Chair and Vice Chair
- £100K for Birmingham to support emerging pressures regarding Children’s Services and Safeguarding
- £35K-£40K for 1 District Council to fund a piece of work on strategy and future direction – details to be agreed with the Chair and Vice Chair
- £40K Black Country MAA – agreed subject to clarity about outcomes etc.
- £175K for Coventry; Solihull and West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authorities for Transformation projects
- £100K for IEWM Transformation Skills Development Programme
- 3 smaller transformation projects for Worcestershire (70K); Staffordshire (£60K) and Stoke on Trent (£50K) which will be shortly approved under delegated powers once proposals are fully developed

- In terms of the Climate Change project (£261K), this was to be the subject of further discussion between Steve Wellings (Climate Change lead) and David Galliers. There was also some discussion regarding the need to explore potential links and opportunities with the NHS and to link in with the work of AWM, GOWM, Sustainability West Midlands etc.; it is important to ensure we are building upon and working with existing regional networks.

6. GOVERNANCE

Andy Hancox presented the governance paper and highlighted the proposal for nominated chief executives to take a lead role in respect of the Transformation, CAA/Improvement and LAA workstreams in particular.

Cllr Norman Davies gave an overview of progress regarding the newly formed Member Steering Group. He also set out the intention to identify member leads within authorities. Cllr Davies attends the national RIEP Member meeting which John Healey chairs and incorporates updates from all other RIEPs; Norman reflected that in his opinion the WMRIEP is the leading RIEP in the country.

Agreed

- The Board agreed that a chief executive(s) would take a lead on the Transformation, CAA/Improvement and LAA workstreams. Leads to be identified outside of the meeting and reported to the next Board.

7. COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

The work that has been completed recently was highlighted in respect of the IEWM branding and re-launch of the website; regular production of the Newsletter etc.

- The Board noted the intention to host a major WMRIEP conference in June 2009.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- 23.4.09 2 – 4 PM
- 23.7.09 All Day
- 29.10.09 2 – 4 PM