

LEICESTERSHIRE STRATEGIC SENIOR OFFICERS' GROUP

6TH SEPTEMBER 2006

REPORT OF LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

LINKS WITH THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY POLICY BOARD

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Group about the proposals of the Policy Board of the East Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) to develop stronger links with County and Unitary LSPs.

Report

2. EMRA's Policy Board is responsible for co-ordinating and developing policy at the Regional level including the preparation and review of the Integrated Regional Strategy, the co-ordination of the social, economic and environmental streams of regional activity and the promotion of sustainable development.
3. In reviewing its activities earlier this year EMRA agreed that better engagement at community level was needed. As a result the Policy Board is reviewing its role. The aims of the review are:
 - To strengthen regional policy by better consultation with sub-regional partners.
 - To provide more opportunity for sub-regional partners to influence regional policy.
 - To strengthen the contribution of sub-regional partners by providing linkages with other sub-regional partners or influence over national policy, and the integration of regional policy objectives into their mainstream planning and activity.
 - To strengthen delivery by better integration between regional and local partners.
 - To strengthen the contribution of Policy Board members by creating greater opportunities to take ownership and ensure engagement in a contemporary and relevant agenda.
4. The attached paper, which was considered by the Board at its meeting on the 1st September, sets out the proposed measures to achieve these aims. A number of these have direct relevance to Leicestershire Together and the Strategic Senior Officer Group as a major element of the proposals involve developing closer working with County and Unitary level LSPs. For example:

- Engagement with County and Unitary level LSPs is proposed and that within each sub regional planning area, the appropriate LSPs would be brought together to address common issues. The sub regional planning area referred to is the 3 Cities area – Leicester and Leicestershire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire and Derby and Derbyshire;
 - It is proposed that the County and Unitary level LSPs and sub regional planning areas will be invited to identify their policy needs during the development of the Policy Board's section of the EMRA Business Plan.
 - It is also proposed that the County and Unitary LSPs, and sub regional planning areas will be provided with a copy of the work programme and invited to contribute on key work streams. Comments received from any partner on policy proposals will be reported to the Board in the context of the executive summary.
5. The conclusions of the Policy Board will be reported at the meeting.

Comment

6. The proposals for a closer working relationship between EMRA and County and Unitary LSPs should ensure that regional policy is influenced by local service delivery policy and practice and that regional policy and local implementation is more integrated in future.
7. The value of meetings of LSPs at sub regional levels is less clear, bearing in mind the existing 3 Cities arrangements, and need to be considered further.

Recommendation

8. That, subject to the decisions of the Policy Board, the proposals set out in its paper be welcomed in principle and that discussions are held with the East Midlands Regional Assembly staff regarding the detail of their implementation.

Officer to contact

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EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL ASSEMBLY POLICY BOARD

Friday 1st September 2006

10.00am

Review of Regional Policy Board

Synopsis

This report sets out the background to the current Regional Policy Board review and outlines a proposed way forward for the future of the Board.

1. Background

- 1.1 A key priority for the Regional Assembly – as identified by the EMRA Board at its away day in March – is better engagement at the community level.
- 1.2 EMRA Board agreed that a review of Policy Board be undertaken to achieve this. In addition, the sub-regional planning areas – as identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy – were considered particularly useful.
- 1.3 As a result of this decision, John Freeman and Yvette Dearden have held meetings with a number of sub-regional partners to explore the most effective way of achieving this. Subsequent discussions have also taken place with Cllr David Sprason.

2. Aims of Policy Board Review

- 2.1 The aims of the Policy Board Review are:
 - To strengthen regional policy by better consultation with sub-regional partners.
 - To provide more opportunity for sub-regional partners to influence regional policy.
 - To strengthen the contribution of sub-regional partners by providing linkages with other sub-regional partners or influence over national policy, and the integration of regional policy objectives into their mainstream planning and activity.
 - To strengthen delivery by better integration between regional and local partners.

- To strengthen the contribution of Policy Board members by creating greater opportunities to take ownership and ensure engagement in a contemporary and relevant agenda.

3. Sub Regional Partners

- 3.1 The Integrated Regional Strategy (IRS) identifies the need to strengthen integration at sub-regional and local levels. The policy development work of the Assembly is of interest and relevance to a wide range of sub-regional partner organisations – the IRS refers specifically to the sub regional planning areas, and to LSPs at a county and more local level, and refers to the growing significance of Local Area Agreements.
- 3.2 The sub-regional structures do not form a consistent pattern throughout the regional landscape; their stage of development, composition and vertical relationships vary; not all have a formal “structure” and administrative support. Through better structuring its own engagement with sub-regional and local partners, the Assembly is in a position to help define the future direction of sub-regional structures.

4. Proposed Way Forward

- 4.1 The following paragraphs within this section of the report outline the proposed way forward.
- 4.2 Engage with the county and unitary level LSPs and, within each sub regional planning area, the appropriate LSPs would be brought together to address common issues. As there is no county wide LSP in Northamptonshire, Policy Board would engage with the Local Area Agreement Strategic Board (LAASB). A map indicating the boundaries of the sub regional planning areas and county and unitary level LSPs is attached as Appendix 1 for information.
- 4.3 Review Policy Board’s terms of reference to clearly define its scope.
- 4.4 Business Plan and Work Programme:
- The county and unitary level LSPs, LAASB in Northamptonshire, and sub regional planning areas will be invited to identify their policy needs during the development of the Policy Board’s section of the EMRA Business Plan.
 - The Groups reporting to the Policy Board will likewise be asked to identify their work programme issues and how they will impact on the Policy Board’s section of the Business Plan. This will also provide an opportunity for the Policy Board to give direction where needed to the work programmes of the respective groups and will replace the present arrangement for the annual review of each group by the Policy Board.
 - The Business Plan and consultation with the groups will enable forward planning of Policy Board agenda and the preparation of an

outline work programme. This annual work programme will optimise opportunities for the “themeing” of meetings to reduce the breadth of items under discussion at any one meeting and to allow issues to be examined by the Policy Board in greater depth.

- The county and unitary LSPs, LAASB in Northamptonshire and sub regional planning areas will be provided with a copy of the work programme and invited to contribute on key work streams. Comments received from any partner on policy proposals will be reported to the Board in the context of the executive summary.
- The work programme will include clear priorities and resources will be prioritised accordingly.

- 4.5 Invite sub-regional partners to contribute to key work streams and establish effective two way communication.
- 4.6 Strengthen the role of Members of the Board by:
- Inviting representatives to become “link” persons with the county and unitary LSPs
 - Inviting representatives to accept “portfolios” on specific issues (eg energy, environment, climate change, health)
 - Inviting members to suggest agenda items for future Board meetings
- 4.7 Ensure engagement and two way communication with sub regional partners in delivering Policy Board’s programme of projects.
- 4.8 Take advantage of the Government requirement to update the IRS Framework by December 2007 to define the new operating processes outlined in this report. The Policy Board will seek a robust engagement with sub-regional partners in updating the IRS, in particular seeking their view on the challenges and priorities facing the region.
- 4.9 Examine and establish two way communications between the Groups that report to the Policy Board and relevant thematic groups established by county and unitary LSPs.
- 4.10 Produce a leaflet to promote the wide ranging policy agenda of the Assembly through its Policy Board.
- 4.11 Review how better to promote and publicise the policies and strategies endorsed by the Policy Board.
- 4.12 Send a “letter of intent” to the county and unitary LSPs advising of these proposed changes.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 Policy Board is asked to discuss and agree the proposed way forward as outlined in section 4 of this report.**

John Freeman, Chair of Policy Board

Cllr David Sprason, Vice Chair of Policy Board

Officer contact:

Yvette Dearden, Acting Head of Regional Policy & Sustainable Development