

WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET
26th JULY 2007

West Midlands Economic Strategy (WMES) Review 2006 - 2007
Consultation on Draft Strategy

OPEN	
COMMUNITY STRATEGY THEME:	Shared Prosperity
CORPORATE PLAN THEME:	Promoting Economic Prosperity
KEY PRIORITY:	Regeneration
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APPENDICES:	Appendix 1: Part one – Proposed Response to the consultation questions Part two – Detailed context, analysis and comments to the WMES Consultation Draft. <i>The appendix to this report has been circulated electronically and a public inspection copy is available on request. (See front cover for details)</i>

1. Summary

- 1.1 This Briefing Paper updates Members regarding the review of the West Midlands Economic Strategy (WMES) and sets out proposed responses to the latest round of consultation for Members to consider.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is asked to **DECIDE** to:

- 2.1 That the recommended responses to the West Midlands Economic Strategy as set out in Appendix 1 (Part One) to this report be submitted to Advantage West Midlands as the Council's consultation response.
- 2.2 That Appendix 1 (in full) be submitted to the Worcestershire Partnership for information.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The purpose of the WMES is to provide a clear framework for achieving future economic prosperity in the West Midlands over the next 20 years. It provides the framework for investment in economic regeneration throughout the West Midlands to raise the region's economic performance.
- 3.2 Advantage West Midlands (AWM) is charged by Government to take the lead in the preparation and review of the WMES. However, the WMES is very much a strategy for the whole region and all the organisations – public, private, community and voluntary – involved in the economic development and regeneration of the region.
- 3.3 The former Prosperity Policy Panel considered two reports on the process so far. The first, considered in December 2006 was intended to set the scene for the process, whilst a subsequent Briefing Paper in February 2007 considered proposed responses to the "Policy Choices Consultation" stage. These responses were subsequently approved by the Cabinet and submitted by the Head of Planning Health and Environment.
- 3.4 The latest consultation subject of this report concerns the published 'Consultation Draft West Midlands Economic Strategy', May 2007, for which the consultation period runs from the 1st May to the 31st July 2007. The draft strategy was considered by the Community and Regeneration Committee on the 11th July 2007. Following AWM's consideration of consultation responses, the Strategy is set to be published during November 2007.
- 3.5 AWM has also advised that an Action Plan is currently being prepared for completion in September 2007. This will transform the 'indicative actions' into SMART actions, assigning clear responsibility for delivery.

4. KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The Committee is advised that AWM will review the WMES within the context of the established Urban and Rural Renaissance objectives of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and that work is being undertaken to seek to ensure that the two strategy reviews continue to mutually support each other.

- 4.2 The three key pillars of the Consultation Draft Strategy are Business, Place and People.
- **Business** refers to the contribution that businesses make to the productivity and growth of the regional economy, and to the demand for employment of the region's workforce.
 - **Place** focuses on the role of place in both attracting and enabling economic growth and also dissuading or constraining economic activity
 - **People** refers to the contribution of the region's population and their skills to the sustainable growth and increased productivity of the West Midlands economy and to ensuring that everyone in the region has the opportunity to develop to their full potential.
- 4.3 It is clear that a successful and vibrant economy requires a balanced and strong contribution from all three of the above components. This is "underpinned" by the fourth component "**A Powerful Voice**" - which relates to proposals regarding promoting and marketing the Region.
- 4.4 In the District Council's earlier submissions on Policy Choices, considerable emphasis was placed on the need to recognise the regeneration needs of towns such as Kidderminster. This was also reflected in the response submitted on behalf of the Worcestershire Partnership. In particular the connection was made with recognition of Kidderminster as a 'Strategic Centre' and Local Regeneration Area' within the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 4.5 Over the years, the focus for regeneration across the region has been targeted at 'regeneration zones' from which Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn have benefited but Kidderminster has not. In this respect the emerging WMES marks a significant departure in seeking to align more closely with the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 4.6 The Strategy identifies a number of proposed foci for economic development 'intervention' involving three tiers:
- 4.6.1 objectives which are region-wide and for which there is no deliberate spatial focus;
 - 4.6.2 objectives which have a primary spatial focus i.e. those areas where substantial capital investment is required e.g. the High Technology Corridor; and
 - 4.6.3 other areas for more limited investment to support sustainable communities, giving a secondary focus.
- 4.7 The areas of secondary focus, include 'growth areas' such as Worcester City, but also "*towns whose economies are undergoing, or have undergone, significant economic restructuring*". The draft strategy states that it "*supports*

investment in these towns to assist the on-going development of these local economies.” In this regard Appendix V of the draft strategy highlights Kidderminster by example. The ‘secondary spatial focus’ concept also includes Market towns which for the purposes of the economic strategy include Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley.

- 4.8 It is clear from the Consultation Draft Strategy that Advantage West Midlands have taken on board the Council’s representations submitted in response to the Policy Choices stage. Kidderminster is now identified within the Strategy as a “Secondary Spatial Focus” and it is proposed that the District Council offer its support for this. The Strategy also continues the Market Towns programme which should support the on-going regeneration of Stourport-on-Severn and Bewdley and again it is proposed that this recognition be supported. However, it is important to note that there is no indication at this stage that this will result in AWM identifying new strategic resources.

Responses to Consultation

- 4.9 The Review documentation sets out a series of consultation questions in order to structure responses. These are set out in Appendix 1 of this report together with the relevant summary extract of the Strategy, Officer comments and the proposed District Council responses.
- 4.10 In addition, the Committee is advised that the Worcestershire Partnership is coordinating a sub regional response to this stage of the consultation on behalf of the County.
- 4.11 At the time of drafting this Briefing Paper, the sub regional response had not been prepared as further consultation is yet to take place. However, as both Members and Officers of both the County Council and District Council will be able to input into such a response and as Members of this Committee are considering the District’s own response through this Paper, the interests of Wyre Forest will be able to be reflected in the formal response to AWM.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications for the District Council arising directly from these consultation proposals.

6. LEGAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal or policy implications arising from this report.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 There are no direct risk management implications arising for the Council from this report.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The WMES will play an important role in shaping the future pattern of development in the Region over the next 20 years. It will provide the strategic framework for the preparation of the District's future Economic Development Strategies.

9. CONSULTEES

- 9.1 None

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 WMES – Consultation Draft
<http://www.advantagewm.co.uk/wmesreview/images/wmes-consultation-draft-final-may-2007.pdf>
- 10.2 WMES – Policy Choices Consultation responses
<http://www.advantagewm.co.uk/wmesreview/images/analysis-of-policy-choices-consultation-responses.pdf>