Agenda item 7

West of England Partnership
Joint Scrutiny Committee
22 January 2010

Audit Commission Review of Governance Arrangements

Recommendation

1. That the Joint Scrutiny Committee:
   i. Notes the action plan proposed in the Audit Commission's draft Review of the Partnership's Governance Arrangements;
   ii. Notes the information provided on the role of the Joint Scrutiny Committee and gives its views on proposed improvements.

Background

2. In the summer the Audit Commission carried out a review of Governance Arrangements in the West of England Partnership. They focused on Waste Phase 3 as a case study, but also looked more broadly at the governance of the Partnership. Their report is at the draft stage and the Partnership has submitted comments on behalf of the four authorities.

3. The attached Appendix shows the Action Plan proposed by the Audit Commission, with tracked changes suggested by the Partnership.

4. Resource Directors have been asked to consider a co-ordinated response to the final report by the Audit Commission, so that there is consistency between authorities in the way that they incorporate the requirements within each authorities' own audit arrangements.

Decision-making

5. As a result of interviews they carried out, the auditors identified some uncertainty about how the Joint Scrutiny Committee operates, in particular about how it deals with its remit. As a result the Audit Commission recommended that the Partnership and Councils review the roles and relationship between the Joint Scrutiny Committee, the Strategic Partnership Board and the WEP Committees to ensure that all members of these groupings are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities. The rest of the report seeks to address these concerns.

6. The Joint Scrutiny Committee's terms of reference are as follows:

   i. To scrutinise any relevant proposals from the West of England Partnership in relation to its activities (namely transport, planning, housing, waste management, skills & employment, economic development, culture and rural affairs);

ii. To scrutinise actions taken and decisions made by the Executive Committees and other Executive bodies of the Partnership;
iii. To make reports or recommendations to the Partnership's Executive Committees and other Executive bodies as appropriate and/or the component authorities' respective executives or overview and scrutiny committees.

7. These show the Joint Scrutiny Committee's ability to scrutinise any of the Partnership's activities, including the work of the Partnership Board.

8. Draft Forward Plans of all the Partnership's Boards and Joint Committees are reported to the annual meetings in June and further developed during the year as the work and timetables become clearer. Updated Forward Plans for the Partnership Board form a standing item on the Board's own agenda.

9. Key decisions relating to the Joint Committees are included in the Forward Plans of the Joint Committees and notified to councils' Democratic Services as part of the statutory process. They are also clearly signposted on the Partnership's website.

10. Members of the Joint Scrutiny Committee receive papers from all the Partnership's Boards and Joint Committees and therefore have access to the latest Forward Plans.

11. The following improvements are proposed:

- An updated Forward Plan for the Joint Scrutiny Committee to form a standing item on the Joint Scrutiny Committee's own agenda, in a similar way to the Board
- Clearer signposting to the Forward Plans of the Boards and the Joint Scrutiny Committee on the Partnership website, in a similar way to the Joint Committees.

12. The views of members of the Joint Scrutiny Committee are sought.

Appendix: Action Plan agreed with Audit Commission

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Action Plan

Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
Accountability and governance					
R1 The Councils with the Partnership should develop criteria to decide which projects are best managed by the West of England Partnership and those which are best carried out at an individual Council level.	3	WEP, Councils and the Partnership Board	Yes	WEP to draft core criteria for approval by Councils and the Partnership Board Leaders of Council 18 December Links to R12 below	February 2010
Decision-making					
R2 The WEP and Councils should review the roles and relationship between the Joint Scrutiny Committee, the Strategic Partnership Board and the WEP Committees to ensure that all members of these groupings are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities.	3	WEP	Yes	Further develop and communicate the existing terms of reference, priority setting arrangements and working methods. • Leaders of Council 18 December • Joint Scrutiny Committee 22 January • Joint Committee/ Boards in February	February 2010
R3 The Councils and WEP should commit to providing training and support for Members representing Councils on the various Boards and Committees.	2	WEP/Councils' Democratic Services/ Councillor training officers	Yes	Discussion and proposals to Boards/ Committees in March cycle of meetings. • Support now provided by new Partnership Secretary. • Further workshops focusing on specific issues to be organised by the Partnership Office[1] and Councils. • Concise information pack to be prepared and promoted.	March 2010

[1] Examples of workshops:
Joint Scrutiny Committee: 14/11/08 on Regional Investment Planning & Prioritisation, which prepared them for consideration of RFA2 on 12/12/08
Planning, Housing and Communities Board: 16/7/09 on the Joint Core Waste Strategy, prior to consideration of the Draft JWCS Submission Document on 7/9/09

Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
				• Other support/training is provided by councils • Council training officers to consider how information on WEP can best be provided at induction.	
R4 An improved method should be determined for the Boards and Committees to allow the prioritisation of work carried out, focusing on high risk tasks.	2	WEP Chief Executive with Chairs of Boards and Committees	Yes	Discussion with Chairs in February and March Further improved arrangements from June Annual meetings.	June 2010
Project management					
R5 The WEP to agree and secure project management resources before starting projects.	2	WEP Chief Executive, Councils and Strategic Partner Organisations	Yes	In each case negotiate blend of contributions from existing resources in the Partnership Office, Councils and Strategic Partner Organisations, based on PID objectives, milestones and risks.	January 2010
R6 Councils need to agree how they will record the time and resources spent at each Council on WEP related tasks to allow proper review of project management costs and VFM.	2	Councils and WEP Chief Executive	Yes	Through: • PIDs and Project Management Boards • Management of agenda of specialist Officer Boards • Prioritisation of Partnership Boards and Committees • Performance Management Framework • Standard report to March meetings	March 2010
Performance management					
R7 The Councils and the WEP to agree a joint performance management framework and define the performance management information required to support it - covering all aspects of the Partnership, not just the individual projects.	3	WEP and Councils	Yes	Framework to: • Chief Executives: 4 December • Leaders of Council: 18 December • Joint Committees/ Boards in February	February 2010

Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
Risk management					
R8 The Councils and WEP to develop a joint risk register covering both individual projects and the partnership as whole.	3	Senior Responsible Owners, WEP Chief Executive, Councils' Chief Executives	Yes	Chief Executives: 4 December Leaders of Council: 18 December	December 2010
R9 The Councils and WEP should agree their respective roles in a communications strategy.	2	WEP Chief Executive and Council Development Directors	Yes	Chief Executives: 5 February	February 2010
R10 The Councils and WEP should agree a communication strategy on a project by project basis.	2	Senior Responsible Owners WEP and Council Media & PR officers	Yes	In place for all transport and some other projects. Remainder to be completed by February. All to be reviewed at Project Boards in March.	March 2010
Value for money					
R11 The Councils with the Partnership should develop value for money measures for the WEP as a whole.	3	Council Chief Executives WEP Chief Executive	Yes	• Chief Executives: 5 February • Leaders of Council: 10 March	March 2010
R12 The Councils and WEP should develop value for money frameworks for all individual projects.	3	WEP with Senior Responsible Owners	Yes	Links to R1	March 2010